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special section

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lattice-top pie

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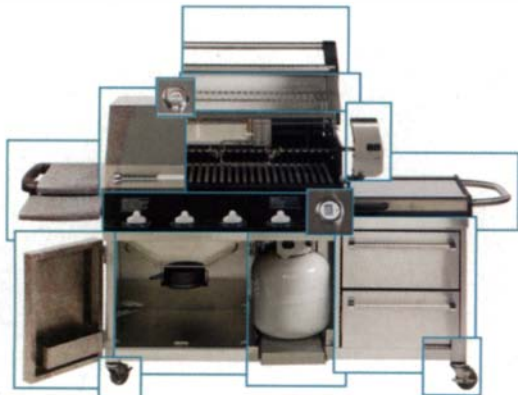
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JUNE / JULY 2004 ISSUE 65



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Grilled Chicken
with Sun-Dried
& Fresh Tomato
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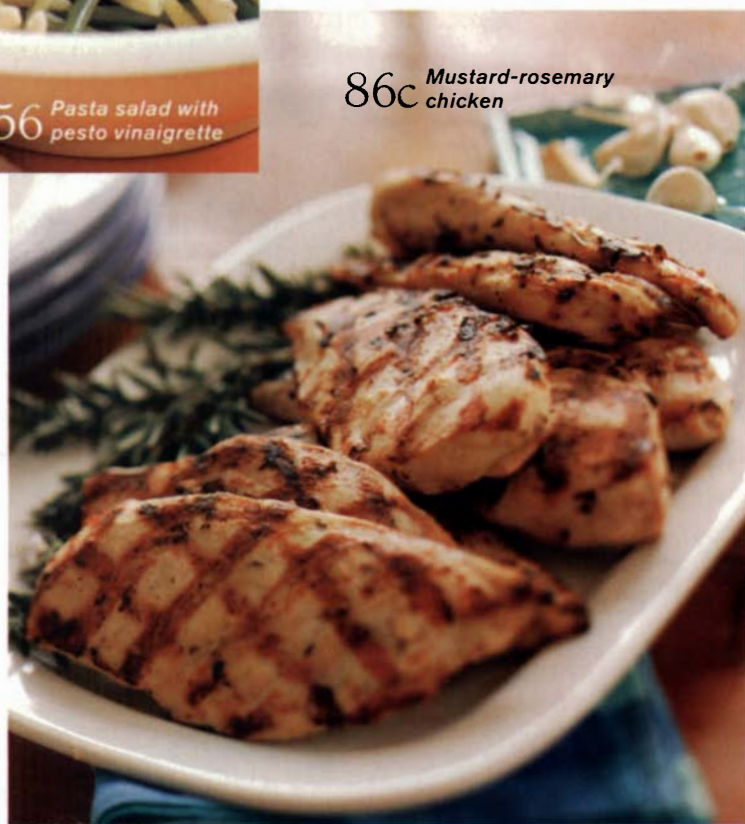
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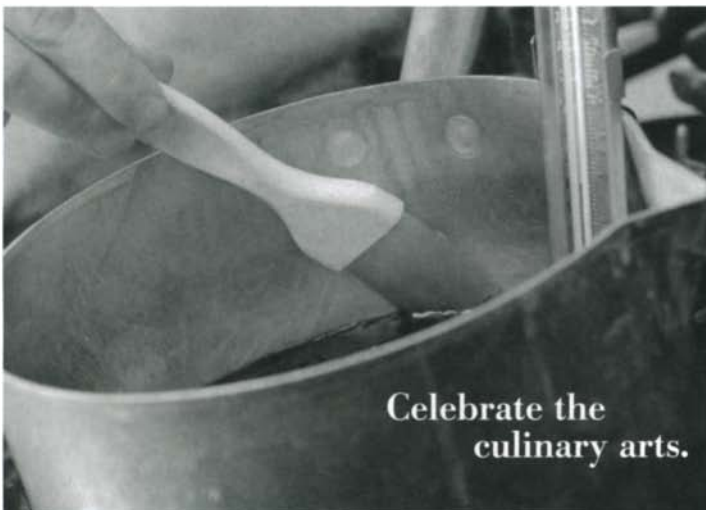


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Salad days

Two of our favorite things about summer are salads and anything from the grill, and we like the idea of combining the two. When you pair grilled chicken or steak with fresh greens, splashy vinaigrettes, and crisp croutons, you're in for a treat—the vibrant flavors of summer salads balance the smoky goodness of the grill. We've started things off with four main-course salad ideas—perfect for weeknights—and followed up with three entertaining menus. Just remember to check the yields on the recipes, as you may need to double or halve them for your needs.

—the editors

4 main-course Salads

Grilled Chicken & Arugula Caesar Salad with Grilled Croutons, p. 86C

Mediterranean-Style Flank Steak & Chunky Tomato-Basil Vinaigrette, p. 43, over a bed of arugula

A romaine salad with feta, olives, shrimp, Lemon-Herb Vinaigrette, p. 58, and Sautéed Croutons, p. 76

Seven-Layer Grilled Southwestern Chicken Salad, p. 86C

3 Entertaining Menus

Casual

This chicken only takes 5 minutes to prepare for the grill, and it's easy to make in large batches for a crowd. Try serving it with a light- to medium-bodied Pinot Noir.

Moist Mustard-Rosemary Chicken, p. 86C

Pasta salad with corn, cherry tomatoes, and artichoke hearts with Sun-Dried Tomato Vinaigrette, p. 58

Apricots with Moscato & Thyme Syrup, p. 55

Spicy

Both the flank steak and the couscous are flavored with cinnamon and cumin, giving this menu a warm, spicy flair. A pale ale is a great drink choice for the smoky flank steak.

Latin-Style Flank Steak with Chipotle Butter, p. 44

Warm Couscous & Zucchini Salad, p. 50

Summer Lattice Blueberry Pie, p. 68, served with vanilla ice cream or Mixed Berries with Vanilla Bean Syrup, p. 53

Quick

A crisp Australian Chardonnay with little or no oak would be a good match for the fish.

Broiled Flounder with Parmesan "Caesar" Glaze, p. 65

Sautéed Zucchini with Sun-Dried Tomatoes & Basil, p. 49

Rosemary & Honey Syrup, p. 53, drizzled over Greek-style yogurt

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1 8-oz. pkg. Cream Cheese, softened
Optional: Berries, fresh or frozen

Puree all ingredients together. Refrigerate for 1 hr. Makes about 2 cups. **SERVING IDEAS:** Serve over your favorite angel food, pound or cheese cake. Use filling in chocolate or pastry cups. Try creating your own dessert masterpiece...pour sauce into a squeeze bottle and swirl onto dessert plate and over your dessert for an elegant, picture-perfect treat!



Strawberry Lemon Frost Shakes



1 jar Dickinson's® Pure Seedless Pacific Mountain™ Strawberry Preserves
3/4 jar Dickinson's® Lemon Curd
1 c. Plain Yogurt
1/2 c. Apple Juice
4 Ice Cubes
Optional: Strawberries, fresh or frozen

Combine all ingredients in a blender container and process until frothy. Divide into two stemmed glasses and garnish with strawberries. Makes 2 servings.

Try substituting your favorite Dickinson's® flavor!



Citrus Chicken with Raspberry Sauce



Marinade:

1 jar Dickinson's® Lemon or Lime Curd
8 oz. Plain Yogurt
3 Tbsp. Cilantro, chopped
1 sm. Jalapeno Pepper, seeded & chopped
1 tsp. Salt
6 Chicken Breast Halves, skinless, boneless

In a medium bowl combine Curd, yogurt, cilantro, jalapeno and salt; blend well. Marinate chicken for 4 hrs. or overnight. Discard marinade. Grill chicken until it is no longer pink. Stir together Preserves and lime juice and drizzle over chicken. Serve immediately. Makes 6 servings.

Sauce:

1 jar Dickinson's® Pure Seedless Cascade Mountain™ Red Raspberry Preserves
2 Tbsp. Lime Juice



Raspberry Lemon Trifle



1 jar Dickinson's® Pure Seedless Cascade Mountain™ Red Raspberry Preserves
1 jar Dickinson's® Lemon Curd
1 lg. box Instant Vanilla Pudding Mix
1 c. Milk

Tear cake into small pieces, set aside. Mix pudding & milk, then fold in Curd; set aside. Put a layer of cake pieces (about 1/3) on the bottom of a trifle dish or deep glass dish. Stir Preserves with a spoon to soften, then spoon 1/3 on top of the 1st cake layer, then top with 1/3 of the Curd mixture & 1/3 whipped topping. Repeat layering until all of the cake is used up. Refrigerate for 2 hrs. Garnish with optional raspberries. Makes 10-12 servings.

1 10"-rd. Angel Food Cake
1 8-oz. container Whipped Topping
Optional: Raspberries, fresh or frozen



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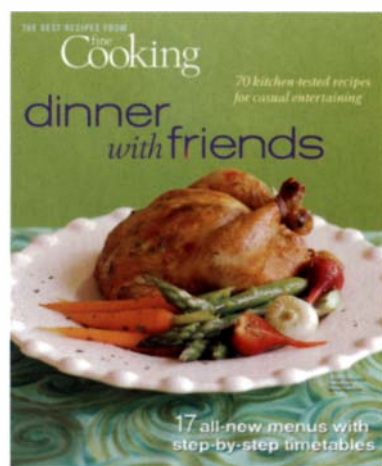
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A Saucy Season

Every issue of *Fine Cooking* has its own personality, and this one is decidedly saucy. With summer finally here, we're all looking for a big hit of flavor *and* unfussy preparations. What better way to ramp things up than to make a zingy vinaigrette, a tangy herb butter, or a fruity salsa? Steve Johnson shows us how to give grilled flank steak a double shot of flavor by starting with a spice rub and finishing with a topping like a chunky vinaigrette or grilled vegetable compote (p. 42). For quick and delicious grilled chicken (p. 86c), take your choice from an easy cilantro-lime butter, a five-ingredient barbecue sauce, or a sun-dried and fresh tomato salsa for fast flavor. We've even got a simple sauce for dessert (check out Irit Ishai's intriguing infused syrups for fruit salads on p. 52).

Of course it's also grilling season, and not only do we have plenty of recipes for you to take outside, but we've also got an incredibly helpful guide to buying a gas grill. Associate editor Kim Masibay and contributing editor Molly Stevens took a hard look at both the quality and quantity of features available on today's gas grills. They tell us what we'll get for our money, and—more important—they guide us to the features and extras that we'll really use, depending on the type of outdoor cooking we plan to do. So if you're thinking of buying your first gas grill, or upgrading to a more deluxe model, be sure to take this convenient pull-out shopping guide to the stores with you.

—Susie Middleton, editor



Our third edition of "The Best of *Fine Cooking*"

Here's a great new collection of entertaining menus called "Dinner with Friends"—it's on newsstands now, or you can order it from our Web site (www.finecooking.com) or by calling toll-free 866-469-0746. With 70 great recipes as well as timetables and shortcut tips for every menu, this is an indispensable entertaining guide for spring, summer, and fall.

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A future *Fine Cooking* back cover?

Have you ever considered how your magazine might inspire a child to cook? My daughter, Kelsey, has always loved good food. When she was eight years old, she said, "Someday I'm going to buy a Jersey cow and make my own Brie." I would occasionally buy her a cooking magazine as a present, but the day I brought home *Fine Cooking* #23, she read the whole thing and asked, "Can I have a subscription to this one?"

For several years, when *Fine Cooking* arrived, Kelsey would sit down, read it cover to cover and then get out all her back issues to reread them. Then, suitably inspired, she would start cooking.

Kelsey is now fourteen and has her Jersey cow, Iris. She milks by hand, and provides us with raw milk, yogurt, butter, several kinds of cheese, and the best coffee ice cream you ever tasted. Last night we had lasagna (*Fine Cooking* #44) with hand-made mozzarella and ricotta, and the Lemon Buttermilk Pound Cake from the same issue. Kelsey's goal in life is to be an artisan cheesemaker.

Someone as passionate about food as Kelsey would have found a way to learn to cook anyway, but your excellent magazine has proved to be the perfect correspondence course!

—Linda Kozak,
Vashon Island, Washington

Hands-off cleaning for a pizza stone

In Q&A, *Fine Cooking* #64, Laura Hyatt asked how to clean a pizza stone. I have found the best way to clean mine is to leave it in the oven during the self-cleaning cycle. Make sure you can leave your racks in during the high-heat cleaning and put the

stone on one of the racks in the middle of the oven. I usually use the shortest clean cycle. All you need to do is wipe up the dust with a damp paper towel once the oven has cooled completely (be sure the stone is cool, too). I know there are some brands of pizza stones that cannot be left in the oven, so it's best to check with the manufacturer.

I leave my stone in the bottom of my oven most of the time. It comes in handy at the last minute when I want to crisp a loaf of thawed crusty bread for dinner.

—Karen Grappone,
Hillsborough, New Jersey

Pointers on perfecting beef stew

We've had tons of mail from happy readers who have made the delicious beef stew in *Fine Cooking* #63 ("How to Make a Rich & Flavorful Beef Stew," by Pam Anderson). We've also heard from a few of you who had one particular problem with this high-heat method—the liquid in your stew reduced too quickly. Here are some pointers to be sure your stew doesn't get scorched:

- ❖ Use a narrower pot. A 9-inch enameled cast-iron pot is ideal. The wider the pot, the quicker the liquid will evaporate.

- ❖ Clean the pan of burned bits after searing the beef. Brown nubbins on the pan bottom are fine, but scrape out blackened pieces to avoid giving the stew a burned flavor.

- ❖ Use an oven thermometer. Many oven thermostats are inaccurate, so you may think you're cooking the stew at 450°F while the actual temperature is 50° higher. If so, the stew could easily burn.

- ❖ Position the oven rack closer to the middle of the oven than the bottom. If the pot is too close to the heating element, the intense heat could cause the pan to run dry.

- ❖ Check the stew at 1 hour instead of 1½ hours. Fifteen minutes can make a big difference when cooking at such a high heat. If the beef is fork-tender at the earlier time, it's ready.

—the editors ♦



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Steve Johnson ("Flank Steak," p. 42) lives for the months when he can grill outside. During his tenure as chef and owner of The Blue Room in Cambridge, Steve received multiple "Best of Boston" awards from *Boston* magazine, as well as a James Beard nomination. He's preparing to open a restaurant in Cambridge later this year.



Irit Ishai



Steve Johnson



Rick Rodgers

Fine Cooking contributing editor **Tony Rosenfeld** first ate zucchini in a zucchini chocolate cake on his fifth birthday. "I only learned of the vegetable's presence after the fact," he says. Since then, he's learned to love zucchini and developed a technique for cooking it perfectly. He shares it with us in his article "Zucchini Loves High Heat" on p. 48. Tony lives near Boston, where he works as a restaurant consultant and food writer.

After almost ten years working as the head pastry chef for distinguished restaurants, **Irit Ishai** ("Fruit Salads," p. 52) decided to start her own business. She took the plunge last January with the opening of Sugar Butter Flour, a bakery in Santa Clara, California. Irit's most recent position was at Manresa restaurant in Los Gatos, California, where she had a reputation for creating an ever-changing lineup of artful and extraordinary desserts, often involving fresh, seasonal fruit.

Chef, cooking instructor, and caterer **Peter Berley** ("Pasta Salads," p. 56) experimented with pasta salads while working as executive chef at Angelica Kitchen, a

well-known vegetarian restaurant in Manhattan. His creative combinations of pasta, fresh seasonal vegetables, and bright vinaigrettes quickly became some of the most popular salads on the menu. Peter is the author of the award-winning *Modern Vegetarian Kitchen*. His most recent book, *Fresh Food Fast*, was published in May. He lives in New York.

Dynamic cooking instructor **Rick Rodgers** teaches classes all over the country and has written more than twenty cookbooks, including *The Carefree Cook*. In his article "Fast, Flavorful Fish" on p. 62, he shares some of his cooking secrets and puts them to work in three elegant, streamlined recipes that are easy to prepare any night of the week.

Joyce Jue ("Saucy Shrimp," p. 72) grew to love Malaysian cuisine while co-writing *The Cooking of Singapore* with Chris Yeo, the chef and owner of Straits Café in San Francisco. Joyce's other

Rose Levy Beranbaum

("Lattice-Top Fruit Pies," p. 66) is best known for her 1988 award-winning book on cakes, *The Cake Bible*, a worn copy of which can be found on every serious baker's bookshelf. Following that major tome, Rose put her meticulous self to work on the other baking arts, publishing *The Pie & Pastry Bible* and, most recently, *The Bread Bible*. So what's next for Rose? Television. She's starring in a new public television cooking series called "Baking Magic with Rose Levy Beranbaum," which airs on PBS stations this year.



books include *Savoring Southeast Asia* and *Far East Cafe*.

Molly Stevens ("Shopping for a Gas Grill," p. 19) is a contributing editor to *Fine Cooking*. She cooks outdoors year-round on everything from campfires to high-tech gas grills at her house in northern Vermont. Classically trained in France, Molly travels and teaches cooking classes across the country. She is a co-editor of the *Best American Recipes* series, and she just finished writing a new book, *All About Braising*, due out in October. *Fine Cooking* associate editor **Kimberly Masibay** took up grilling (over a bonfire, admittedly) when she was living in rural Germany and working in a pastry shop. When she moved to New York City, she figured grilling was out of the question. But in putting together our gas-grill buying guide, she actually found a perfect little city grill. "If I can find a gas grill that fits my lifestyle, anyone can."

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in season



Try a different cut

Instead of mincing or chopping, try cutting garlic in different shapes, depending on how you plan to use it.



THIN SLICES OR SLIVERS of garlic are good for sautéing slowly in olive oil until golden. A great garnish for sautéed spinach.



CUT CLOVES IN HALF to add to braises and broths. They release a little of their flavor while getting soft and tender, too.



GRATE garlic to make an instant purée. I often use a rasp-style grater to grate garlic rather than mincing it.



GRIND garlic in a mortar with a pinch of kosher salt, which yields a purée that's perfect for adding to rustic sauces.

fresh garlic is a summer treat

BY RUTH LIVELY

If you've ever tasted old, bitter garlic, you'll appreciate fresh garlic's vibrant flavor and juiciness. And early summer is garlic harvest time, so take advantage of the fresh stuff. Stored in a cool, dark, airy place, garlic can keep well for months, but it loses moisture over time, so the fresher it is when you use it, the better it will taste.

At the market, look for firm heads with tight, multi-layered skin. This time of year, avoid garlic with green shoots, a sign it's likely leftover from the last harvest.

Fresh garlic is so full of moisture that it actually cooks more quickly than older garlic. Use low, gentle heat and pay attention, because scorched garlic has an acrid odor and bitter taste. When sautéing or frying, add garlic after other ingredients have given off moisture. Rather than putting garlic on meat before grilling, I incorporate puréed garlic into a sauce or relish to put on after cooking. Or I make a marinade with smashed cloves or pieces that are big enough to wipe off before cooking.

(Continued on p. 18)

3 ways to cook a big batch of garlic

Oven-roasted heads of garlic, or individual cloves either simmered in oil or stewed in water or stock, are not only delicious on their own but also a handy ingredient to have on hand. Cooked cloves keep for about a week in the refrigerator.

Simmer

My favorite way of cooking garlic is simmering it in olive oil, because it yields soft, buttery cloves and a bonus of garlic-infused oil. Put whole peeled cloves in a small heavy pan, add olive oil to cover, and simmer very gently over low heat until tender, 15 to 20 minutes. (For more about this technique, see *Fine Cooking* #49).

Roast

Whole fresh garlic, with its high moisture content, is the best for roasting. Remove loose outer skins from the head and cut off the top to expose the cloves. Set in a baking dish or on foil, drizzle with olive oil, and roast at 350°F until tender, about 45 minutes. Squeeze the cloves out when they're cool enough to handle. You can also break apart garlic heads and roast individual cloves this way, too.

Stew

Try baking or simmering unpeeled garlic cloves in a mixture of water or stock, oil and spices, covered, until tender. Peel and use the cloves as needed, or puree them all at once in a food mill, discarding the skins. This method yields garlic with a slightly more assertive, less mellow flavor.



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Using cooked garlic

- ❖ Spread on a piece of bread or toast and add some freshly ground black pepper and a pinch of salt.
- ❖ Mash into a vinaigrette.
- ❖ Mash into the pan juices after cooking meat or vegetables.
- ❖ Work into softened cheese for a spread or pasta topping.
- ❖ Use as a pizza topping, either mashed or whole.
- ❖ Add to purées—potato, salt cod, eggplant.
- ❖ Mash and add to chicken broth for a complex soup base or a quick pick-me-up.

in the garden

Garlic is easy to grow, but you'll need to plan ahead. Order a tasty variety, such as Siberian, Georgian Crystal, Gypsy Red, or Persian Star (for sources, see p. 82). Plant individual skin-on cloves in the fall, five or six weeks before the ground freezes, 4 to 6 inches apart and 2 inches deep. (The bigger the clove, the bigger the head of garlic it's likely to make.) When the ground gets cold, cover with mulch. In the spring, the garlic will start to

grow (if the fall is warm and moist, it may sprout then; that's fine). Fertilize with fish emulsion or liquid seaweed and water lightly during the growing season. Harvest when

the lower two leaves turn yellow, but the rest of the leaves are still green. Store whole plants in a shaded, airy place for several weeks to let them cure. Then trim the tops and roots, brushing off any soil clinging to the bulb, but leave on the layers of dried skin to help preserve moisture.



Using raw garlic

Rub an empty wooden salad bowl with a cut clove of garlic before tossing a salad in it. For a more assertive garlic presence, grate a clove into vinaigrette.

Make a terrific green mayonnaise for spreading on sandwiches. Using a mortar, grind a clove of garlic, a pinch of salt, and some chopped green herbs (basil, cilantro, mint, or a mixture) to a paste. Stir in some good-quality prepared mayonnaise, and add a grind of pepper and a dash of hot sauce.

Rub a slice of warm toasted bread with a clove of garlic for a great base for savory appetizers. Topping ideas: a slice of tomato and a basil leaf, chopped roasted vegetables, sautéed greens, chopped sautéed chicken livers, or fresh mozzarella.

For mashed potatoes with subtle garlic flavor, cook several peeled whole cloves of garlic along with the potatoes.

Ruth Lively was the senior editor of Kitchen Gardener magazine. ♦

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A Cook's Guide to Buying a Gas Grill

Assess your needs, learn about the key features,
and find out which models suit you best

BY KIMBERLY Y. MASIBAY & MOLLY STEVENS

Whether you're hunting for your first gas grill or upgrading to the model of your dreams, the choices may seem dizzying. We've been there.

More than 60 manufacturers make gas grills, and they come in a number of sizes and with every accessory imaginable. But after cooking on many grills, we realized there's an easy way to narrow the field of contenders: Just ask yourself what kind of grilling you want to do, familiarize yourself with the anatomy of a grill, jot down a wish list of features you want...and then hit the stores.

This guide will walk you through the process. We'll show you the features no decent grill should be without. We'll introduce you to our favorite bells and whistles. And we'll give you the lowdown on our own grilling adventures.

Decide what you need before you shop

A quick quiz can help you start thinking about what you need and what you don't.

HOW OFTEN will you fire up the grill, and what will you cook? Don't pay for features you'll never use.

HOW MANY people will you usually grill for? The grilling surface should be big enough for you to cook everyone's food at the same time.

HOW MUCH space do you have? Grills take up more room than you might think. Get out a measuring tape and size up your patio.

HOW MUCH do you want to pay? Let's face it, money matters. Gas grill prices begin around \$100 and rocket into the stratosphere. If you're new to grilling, it's not a mistake to choose an inexpensive grill; there are strong performers at low prices. If you're ready to drop some serious cash, look for a model that's built to last and has the warranty to prove it.

First, decide what you want to grill

A grill that turns out perfect steaks and burgers—beautifully seared and juicy inside—might not produce a succulent slow-roasted whole chicken. So it makes sense to think first about what you want to cook and then hunt for a grill that does a good job with all the things you want it to do. Here's what to look for.

About our methods

When we decided to write this guide, we didn't set out to evaluate every grill on the market, nor to crown one grill "the best." Our goal from the outset was to show you how to find a grill that's perfect for you.

How we got to know the grills. We needed to get familiar with the various options available so we could advise you of how these things would affect your grilling experience. To that end, we cooked on a representative sampling of 15 gas grills, which included small portables, affordable "starter" grills, mid-price models with solid reputations, grills with intriguing innovations, and luxury versions with all sorts of enticing bells and whistles. (See the chart on p. 26.)

After assembling the grills and learning which felt sturdy and which rickety, we wheeled them into a lot outside our test kitchen, a few at a time over a matter of weeks, to test-drive them. Being in Connecticut in the winter, this meant grilling in a wide range of weather conditions, from pleasantly sunny and calm to sub-zero wind chills. Overall, the grills didn't mind the cold as much as we did.

What we cooked: To judge the grills' performance, we cooked at high, medium, and low temperature settings, working our way through pounds of hamburgers, vegetables, fatty sausages, thick-cut strip steaks, bone-in pork chops, salmon fillets, and chicken (whole and cut up). We also double-checked the evenness of the heat on each grill by grilling pizza dough.



For burgers and steaks, one or two burners will do

Basic high-heat grilling is about throwing a few steaks, burgers, or chicken breasts onto a sizzling-hot grill, flipping them once or twice, and pulling them off when they're appealingly charred around the edges and cooked to juicy perfection inside. If the sear marks are striking, all the better. This is called *direct* grilling. If this pretty much does it for you, then evenly distributed, strong heat is your priority. Hunt for a simple grill with hefty cooking grates made of cast iron or porcelain enamel-coated cast iron and a reliable, high-output burner (or two)

that gets nice and hot but can also be adjusted to medium heat for grilling bone-in chicken thighs, chops, fish, and vegetables. We turned out succulent steaks, burgers, and boneless chicken on every grill we cooked on, but we were especially pleased with the simplicity and effectiveness of Weber's Q and Genesis, the Solaire Anywhere, the Fiesta Optima, and the Broilmaster Super P3 (for model information, see p. 26).



For roasting, three burners are ideal

A mixed grill needs more room

If you think you'd also like to cook a medley of meats, poultry, kebabs, vegetables, and seafood at once for outdoor parties, you'll need a larger grill with a maximum of individually controlled burners (three is great) so that you can maintain several heat zones. It takes some finesse and juggling to cook this way, but once you get the hang of it, it's a lot of fun. In our tests we even managed to turn out rare, medium, and well-done steaks at the same time. Of the grills we cooked on, our favorites for size and controllability were the Weber Summit, DCS, Wolf, Viking, and Vieluxe (for models, see p. 26).



To slow-cook bone-in chicken, thick chops, and whole birds, we used a technique called indirect grilling (or grill roasting). Indirect grilling delivers gentle, even heat, so the meat cooks through yet remains juicy and isn't charred on the outside.

If you also want to cook by indirect grilling, you'll need a grill with a tight lid and at least two—preferably three—independently controlled burners. To set up a gas grill for this mellow method of grilling, start by heating the grill with all the burners on high or medium high, but then turn off one burner and reduce the others to medium low. Set the food over the section that's left off and close the lid. The grill performs much like an oven set in the range of 300° to 375°F—perfect for “roasting” anything from a luxurious prime rib to a spice-rubbed pork loin.

For jumbo roasts, you also need lots of headspace. If you want to grill roast the Thanksgiving turkey or a whole leg of lamb, you need generous clearance when you close the lid. When we cooked whole chicken upright on a beer can, we got the best results in grills that had enough headroom to let the heated air circulate freely inside the grill. The most spacious grills we found were those with squarish (rather than rounded) lids: Kenmore, Weber, Viking, Wolf, to name a few.

Warming racks should be easy to remove. For cooking large items, those racks hanging inside the lid need to come out. Some require a lot of wrestling to remove.

Set-up tip: Manufacturers have any number of ways of saying a grill is easy to set up—8-step, 10-minute, 1-tool, no-tool—but, frankly, assembling grills is a pain. And we have the battle scars to prove it. The metal edges of the grill parts are extremely sharp, so if you must put your grill together, wear heavy-duty work gloves and brace yourself for a couple of hours of frustration. Is that any way to get to know your new grill? Most retailers offer free or inexpensive assembly; take them up on the offer.

Cold-weather grilling

A gas grill is a cinch to fire up, even on cold days when you're not hanging out on the patio. If you love grilled food so much that you plan to do it in any weather, consider how well insulated the grill box and lid are. Look for heavy-gauge stainless-steel construction, such as the double-walled design of a Kenmore Elite, DCS, Viking, or any Weber.

Some grills have a wide gap at the top of the backside when the lid is closed. This vent prevents the grill from overheating when the rotisserie is lit or when all the burners are set to high. In decent weather the vent isn't an issue, but on below-freezing days, we found that grills with wide vents struggled to maintain a temperature hot enough for indirect grilling.

And when the weather is teeth-chatteringly cold, it's hard to argue with the Solaire Infravection, which gets mighty hot in just 3 minutes.

Next, get to know the key features

The anatomy of a gas grill is pretty simple: body, lid, grates, burners. But a host of differences in the design and construction of those basic parts adds up to big variation in price, performance, and durability. Here's the scoop:

Heat distribution prevents hot spots

Between the burners and cooking grates of most grills are metal or ceramic inserts. They prevent flare-ups by shielding the flaming burners from dripping grease. They also absorb the intense heat coming off the burners and distribute it—evenly, one hopes—to the cooking grates. We saw one model with smooth, ceramic rods, but most of the other grills had inverted V-shaped metal barriers, like the one in the photo at right.

When grease drips onto the sizzling hot metal, it burns off, creating flavorful smoke. Grease that doesn't burn up flows down the angled metal and drains into a catch pan below the grill.



Burners control the heat

You can't grill without heat. Inside every gas grill is at least one burner, which burns propane or natural gas to generate heat. People always want to know how hot a grill can get, but it's also important to consider how well a grill can maintain more moderate temperatures. Multiple burners with their own controls give you the most control over the heat of the grill.

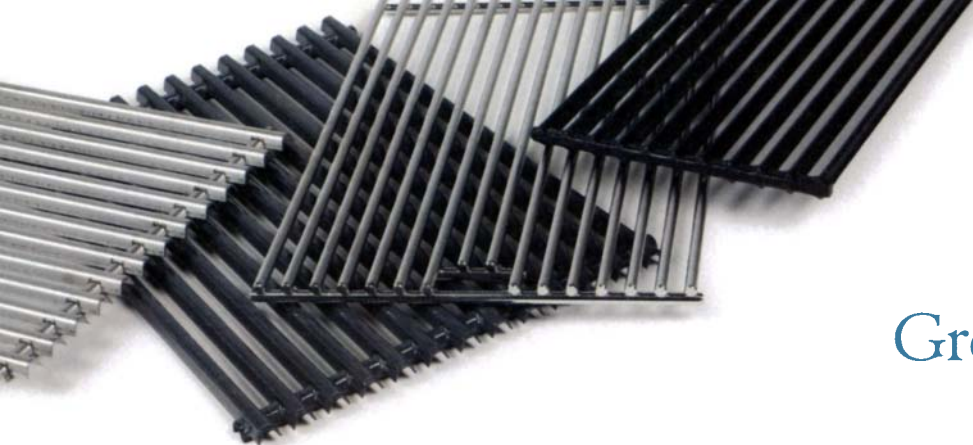
The most affordable burners are made of two pieces of sheet metal (steel) crimped together. But the thin steel tends to burn out and corrode with the high heat of grilling. You'll pay more for a grill that has burners made of thick-walled welded stainless steel or cast metal, but these durable materials can withstand the heat of grilling without rusting, warping, or burning through and should come with generous warranties, ideally ten years.

Burners come in a variety of configurations. Some grills have straight tubes running from front to back or left to right; some are U-shaped tubes; some have H- or bowtie-shaped burners. In our tests, we didn't see any remarkable advantages to any one shape.



Don't get bamboozled by Btu

British thermal units refer to the amount of heat a grill can produce. Most standard grills with two or three burners deliver 30,000 to 50,000 Btu and get plenty hot. The higher the Btu, the faster the grill burns fuel, so more isn't necessarily better. Instead of asking how many Btu a grill has, ask about the grill's fuel-burning efficiency. And note that grills made of heavy-duty materials that retain heat may require less fuel to get sizzling hot.



Grease collection limits flare-ups

Heavy grates make the best sear marks

When it comes to grilled food, people get really hung up on sear marks. The best-looking ones come from hefty grates with wide, tightly spaced bars that hold heat well. (After watching more than a few zucchini slices and burgers fall through the grates, we concluded that thin, wiry rods just won't do.) Grates are generally made of one of the following five materials, most with pros and cons.

CHROME-PLATED STEEL Inexpensive up front. But these types of grates can rust and may need to be replaced from time to time, which adds up over the long haul.

PORCELAIN-COATED STEEL A step up from chrome, porcelain-coated steel is easy to clean and resists rust. The porcelain coating can chip if cleaned with abrasives, so clean with a bristle brush.

CAST IRON Bare cast iron sears beautifully. It retains heat well and, therefore, delivers steady, even heat. But it does require some upkeep. To prevent rust, regular seasoning with oil is a must. This isn't difficult, but you may not want to be bothered.

PORCELAIN-COATED CAST IRON Excellent heat retention and easy to clean. But again, the coating can chip.

STAINLESS STEEL Generally found on luxury grills, stainless-steel grates are the most durable option. They don't retain heat quite as well as cast iron, but they're easier to clean and they won't rust.

Grate tip: Check to see how far the grate is above the heat source: 4 to 7 inches is ideal; much closer than that and it's hard to cook at anything but high heat, which could leave you with charred food.

Service tip: Is help going to be there when you need it? To find out, call a manufacturer's customer service number (preferably on a weekend evening) before you buy a grill.

As meat cooks, it releases grease. Some grills—usually super-deluxe ones—are designed so that the grease falls or flows into a wide shallow tray beneath the burners (see the photo below). The design is elegant and in most cases effectively gets the grease away from the burners, thereby preventing flare-ups. But cleaning these drawers is a pain. Who wants to move a drawer the size of a kiddie pool filled with grease?

We prefer systems that funnel the grease into a receptacle of manageable size—like the fancy little saucepan in the Vieluxe, the disposable aluminum pan in the Weber Q, or the little soup can (don't laugh) in the Fiesta Optima. Soup cans may be low-tech, but they're easy to come by and even easier to toss out when full.



Then, decide which extras you'd use

Rotisseries

Spit-roasted food is delectable because the meat bastes itself with its own juices as it turns and roasts to crisp perfection in front of a fire or infrared burner, a gas-fired ceramic unit that glows like red-hot charcoal and radiates extremely concentrated heat, up to 1,600°F. If you're new to rotisserie cooking, don't worry: It's foolproof. Well, almost. We did find one grill with a rotisserie but no infrared burner. The meat was meant to cook from the heat rising off the burners below.



The result was a disaster. The juices dripped onto the lit burners, creating enormous flare-ups, and in 15 minutes the entire chicken was in flames. Lesson learned: A rotisserie requires a rear infrared burner, and when you're using the rotisserie, never light the grill burners. Finally, if it's windy, beware—we found that gusts blow out even the beefiest rear infrared burners.

Infrared burners

Spit-roasting in front of an infrared burner takes no getting used to, but grilling over one does. Like the super-hot restaurant broilers known as salamanders, the infrared sear burners found in several high-end grills brown and heat foods in seconds. And until you know what you're doing, it's easy to incinerate your meat instead of sear it.

When you put a steak over an infrared burner, the sear marks appear between the grates (not from the grates themselves). The grates actually seem to protect the food from the intense heat. In our cooking tests, Solaire's full-size and portable infrared grills did an excellent job on relatively quick-cooking, high-heat items like steaks, burgers, and chicken breasts. Things got trickier when we tried to grill thicker, slower-cooking items (like bone-in chicken and chops) that require more moderate heat.



Smokers

You can successfully smoke foods on almost any grill by simply rigging up a foil pouch or a metal tray filled with pre-soaked wood chips. If, however, you like to smoke foods frequently, consider a grill that comes with a built-in smoker box or tray. We encountered several types of "smoker systems," and we even had one episode where the wood chips burst into flames because we left the burner set too high. Our little inferno underscored our feeling that the best smoker trays are those that sit directly over an independently controlled burner (as in the DCS, Weber Summit, Viking, and Vieluxe). Just be sure to remember to lower the heat once the chips begin smoking. We were much less impressed by the effectiveness of smoker boxes that are not attached to a designated burner. It's easier to use a good old foil pouch than to fumble with an ineffective smoker box.



Side burners

We confess to mixed feelings about the utility of a side burner. You probably wouldn't miss it if you didn't have one; yet if you had one, you might find all sorts of uses for it. One way to decide if you need a side burner (or two) is to think about the distance from your kitchen to your outdoor grill. One of our editors sets her grill just outside the kitchen door, and she never uses the side burners on her grill—it's more convenient to step inside. But if you'd prefer not to run back and forth, then maybe a side burner is for you.

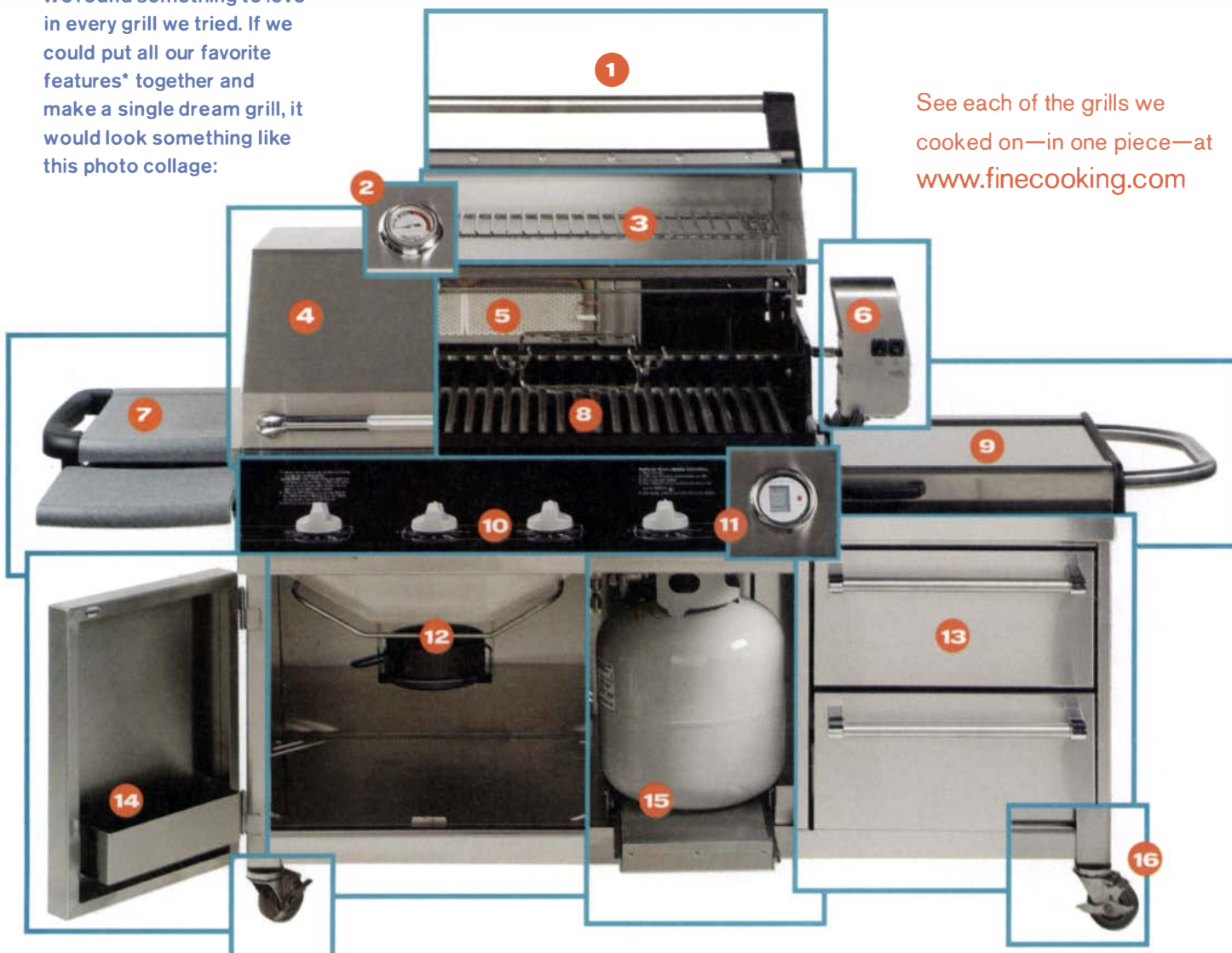
If so, look for a sturdy one, like that of the Wolf, Vieluxe, or Kenmore Elite. Flimsier ones are more of an annoyance than a help: The flame blows out easily, pans slide off if not carefully monitored, and they eat up space that could be used to hold your grilling tools.



Finally, make your wish list

We found something to love in every grill we tried. If we could put all our favorite features* together and make a single dream grill, it would look something like this photo collage:

See each of the grills we cooked on—in one piece—at www.finecooking.com



1 A sturdy stay-cool handle (Weber Summit).

2 A thermometer built into the hood (Viking).

3 A single easy-to-remove and unobtrusive rear warming rack (Patio Gourmet).

4 Double-walled stainless-steel hood for heat retention and durability, not to mention good looks (Solaire).

5 A rear infrared rotisserie burner (Weber Summit).

6 A stainless-steel rotisserie attachment with a heavy-duty motor and a built-in halogen light (DCS).

7 A side table with a handle for moving the grill and for extra work space (Weber Genesis).

8 Heavy-duty enameled cast-iron cooking grates (Weber Summit).

9 A stainless-steel work surface that glides open to reveal side burners (Vieluxe).

10 Horizontally mounted burner knobs so you can see your burner settings with just a downward glance (Weber Summit).

11 An easy-to-read propane-tank fuel gauge (Kenmore).

12 A funnel-shaped drip tray with small catch pan for easy cleanup (Vieluxe).

13 A warming drawer and a storage drawer (Viking).

14 A heavy-duty latching door with a condiment rack (Solaire).

15 An out-of-sight tank on a roll-out tray (DCS).

16 Four locking casters for stability and maneuverability (Vieluxe).

**Note: The highlighted features are not necessarily exclusive to the brand mentioned.*

Meet the grills we cooked on

Use this chart to familiarize yourself with the kinds of features available at different price points. Remember stores may have many other brands than these.

Grills model, web site, and phone number	Price MSRP	Burners material & Btu	Grates material	Heat distribution system	Grease collection system	Extras included
Char-Broil Charcoal/Gas 463841704 www.charbroil.com; 800-232-3398	\$189	2 crimped stainless steel; 35,000 Btu	porcelain-coated steel wire	steel "flame-tamer" burner guards	disposable can	night-light in lid handle; converts from gas to charcoal
Fiesta Optima ESD45055-B401 www.fiestagasgrills.com; 800-396-3838	\$198	2 H-shaped stainless steel; 45,000 Btu	porcelain-coated cast iron	inverted V-shaped steel inserts	disposable can	side burner
Weber Q Portable 396001 www.weber.com; 800-446-1071	\$199	1 stainless steel; 12,000 Btu	porcelain-coated cast iron w/burner guards	n/a	disposable tray	
Solaire Anywhere Portable SOL-IR17B www.solairegrills.com; 562-696-8718	\$295	1 ceramic infrared; 14,000 Btu	stainless steel	n/a	n/a	travel bag
Char-Broil Stainless Series 463244404 www.charbroil.com; 888-22-GRILLS	\$399	3 porcelain cast iron; 40,000 Btu	stainless-steel rods	perforated steel burner guards	disposable cup	side burner
Weber Genesis Silver B 62288001 www.weber.com; 800-446-1071	\$549	3 stainless steel; 36,000 Btu	porcelain-coated steel	stainless-steel inverted V-shaped bars	disposable tray	
Broilmaster Super P3 P3F (cart PCCART) www.broilmaster.com; 800-851-3153	\$1,112 (cart \$324)	2 bowtie crimped stainless steel; 40,000 Btu	stainless steel	stainless-steel mesh screen	disposable pan	side burner; cover
Kenmore Elite 4-Burner freestanding grill (LPGAS 16680) www.sears.com; 800-349-4358	\$1,499	4 cast-iron; 44,000 Btu	stainless steel	stainless-steel M-shaped radiants	full-width tray	side burner; rear infrared burner;
Patio Gourmet Elite 36-inch grill w/optional cart (PGE-36-Cart) www.heatnglo-lifestyle.com; 888-427-3973	\$1,250 (cart \$325)	1 moveable steel burner; 36,000 Btu	porcelain-coated cast-iron sear plates & stainless-steel rods	perforated steel convection plate	full-width tray	electronic temperature probe; cover
Weber Summit Gold D 5290001 www.weber.com	\$1,899	6 stainless steel; 57,600 Btu	stainless steel	stainless-steel inverted V-shaped bars	disposable tray	side burner; smoker burner; rear infrared burner w/rotisserie
Viking 41-inch Gas Grill w/cart VGBQ4103RT www.vikingrange.com; 888-VIKING1	\$3,100	3 H-shaped stainless steel; 75,000 Btu	porcelain-coated steel	perforated stainless-steel plates	full-width tray	smoker burner; rear infrared burner w/rotisserie; warming drawer
Solaire 30-inch InfraVection SOL-AGBQ30CVILP www.solairegrills.com; 562-696-8718	\$3,495	1 ceramic infrared & 1 U-shaped stainless steel; 55,000 Btu total	stainless steel	stainless-steel baffles over the conventional burner	full-width tray	rear infrared burner w/rotisserie; cover
Wolf 36-inch Gas BBQ Grill BBQ362BI www.subzero.com; 800-222-7820	\$3,900	6 stainless steel; 60,000 Btu	porcelain-coated cast iron	stainless-steel inverted V-shaped heat spreader	full-width tray	dual side burners; rear infrared burner w/rotisserie
DCS 36-inch Pro Grill & Cart BGB36-BQAR (cart BGA36-CSS) www.dcsappliances.com; 800-433-8466	\$4,698	3 U-shaped stainless steel; 75,000 Btu	cast stainless steel	ceramic radiants	full-width tray	smoker burner; rear infrared burner w/rotisserie; 50-watt halogen light
Vieluxe 44-inch Freestanding 360201 www.vieluxe.com; 866-VIELUXE	\$6,000	4 stainless steel; 50,000 Btu	stainless-steel rods	stainless-steel inverted V-shaped bars	Teflon-coated drip pan	dual side burners; smoker burner; rear infrared burner w/rotisserie

More grill makers

We didn't cook on these manufacturers' grills, but each carries models comparable to the ones above.

Arctic Products www.arcticproducts.com

Aussie Grill www.aussiegrill.com

Broil King www.broilkingbbq.com

Bull Outdoor Products www.bullbbq.com

Cal Spas (CalFlame grills) www.calspas.com

CFM Specialty Home Products www.majesticproducts.com

Coleman www.coleman.com

Dacor www.dacor.com

Ducane www.ducane.com

Dynasty www.jadeappliances.com

KitchenAid Outdoor Products www.kitchenaid.com

Lynx Professional Grills www.lynxprofessionalgrills.com

Napoleon www.napoleongrills.com

Phoenix Grill Company www.phoenixgrill.com

Sherwood Industries www.envirofire.biz

Sure Heat Manufacturing www.sureheat.com

Thermador Char-Glo www.thermador.com

Uniflame www.uniflame.com

Vidalia Outdoor Products www.vidaliagrill.com

Kimberly Y. Masibay is an associate editor for Fine Cooking; Molly Stevens is a contributing editor. ♦



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The Taunton Press



Keep spices within reach

Some cooks love to experiment in the kitchen, to veer away from the structure of a recipe. Since we often cook this way ourselves, we like Napastyle's wooden spice box, which lets you reach in and grab pinches of flavor to toss into your sautés or onto your roasts. The acacia box fits easily on a counter and comes with ten packets of salt blends, herb mixes, and spice rubs, from a citrus pepper blend to roasted garlic gray salt. The spices are very fresh, so take note if you're sensitive to strong aromas—the box is powerfully fragrant. *Spice box*, \$85, from Napastyle.com (866-776-6272).

A toasty, nutty Moroccan oil

This vividly golden organic nut oil is extracted from the kernels of the nut of the argan tree, which grows in Morocco. The kernels are toasted, giving the oil a deep, nutty quality that makes it great for drizzling over pasta, crostini, or vegetables. It also adds a pleasantly bold nut flavor to vinaigrettes. *Toasted argan oil*, \$26 for 8.45 ounces, at EarthyDelights.com (800-367-4709).



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A quintet of soy sauces

Don't be fooled: These mini milk cartons are actually filled with soy-based sauces from Kamada Foods. We liked experimenting with the set, but you can also order each sauce separately. Try the rich, dark sashimi soy for dipping sushi; drizzle the salad soy over shredded carrots, cucumbers, and greens; or stir the teien dashi soy into Asian noodle soups. *Five Tastes set*, \$17.15, from Kamada.ca (877-722-5769).

A taste test for honey

It isn't always easy to detect subtle differences between honeys. That's why we like to compare several varieties side by side. This Beehive Bee sampler includes nine unprocessed honey varietals, so once you discover which one is your favorite, you can buy a larger jar. Each honey comes from a specific plant, from orange blossom to sage and buckwheat. They're all delicious, with flavor notes ranging from deep toffee, caramel, and spice to floral and fruity. *Nine-piece honey sampler*, \$45, at BeehiveBeeProducts.com (718-834-1518).



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Great tools for prepping fruits and vegetables

For small slicing tasks, we're fans of L'Econome serrated paring knives. Their rustic-looking multi-colored handles make them downright cute, but they're also just the kind of all-purpose paring knives you want in your kitchen. Handy and compact, they're excellent for slicing fruit and salad vegetables (especially

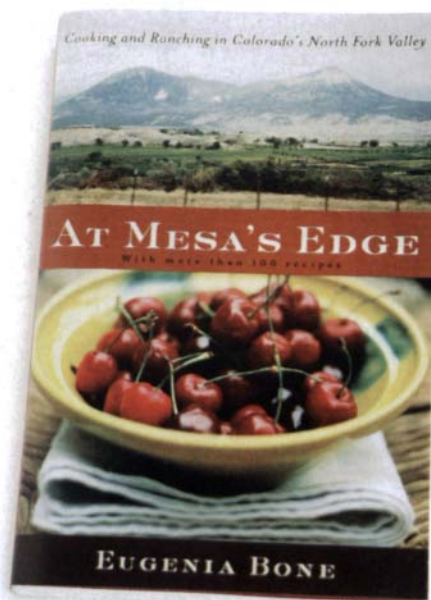
cherry tomatoes) or just for cutting through a sandwich. And the Messermeister serrated-edge peeler works wonders with summer produce; its extremely sharp edge removes skins from peaches and tomatoes smoothly and easily. *L'Econome serrated paring knife, \$7 each or \$29 for a set of five, at Williams-*

Sonoma (877-812-6235; www.williams-sonoma.com.) Messermeister serrated-edge peeler, \$5.50, at Sur La Table (800-243-0852; www.surlatable.com).

Light, fizzy, and easy to sip

If you've seen us rave about Prosecco and Moscato before, you know why we love these Italian sparklers: Both Prosecco and its lightly sweet cousin Moscato are low in alcohol, gently fizzy, easy on the wallet, and delicious. But what also pleases us about the ones Mionetto makes is that they come in half bottles, as well as full ones. Either way, these bubbles are easy to drink, perfect for a picnic—and they're crown-capped like beer bottles, so it's all right if you forget the corkscrew.

—Amy Albert,
senior editor

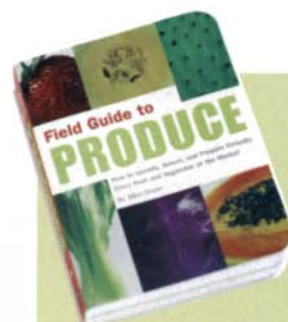


Cooking at the ranch

Part memoir, part cookbook, *At Mesa's Edge* (Houghton Mifflin, \$24), by Eugenia Bone, is the story of a New York food writer who reluctantly heads west with her

family to restore a dilapidated Colorado ranch. As the author throws herself into gardening, foraging, fly-fishing, big-game hunting, and—of course—cooking, she gradually connects with the land. And she evokes its flavors in a unique collection of recipes, inspired by her neighbors' free-range beef and lamb, a local orchard's profusion of stone fruits, and the bountiful garden in her own yard.

—Kimberly Y. Masibay, associate editor



Fruit and vegetable shopping just got a whole lot easier, thanks to Aliza Green's handy little Field Guide to Produce (Quirk Books, \$14.95). Whenever you come across an unfamiliar edible at the market, flip through the book until you find its picture; then read the in-depth description for tips on selecting, storing, and preparing the item.

—K.Y.M.

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I often have more avocados than I can eat. Is there a way to freeze them that will preserve their texture?

—Frank Ormond, via e-mail

A **Jim Peyton responds:** Although avocados don't freeze well whole or sliced, I've found that nicely ripe (but not overripe) ones can be frozen for up to five months if they're first peeled, seeded, and mashed like guacamole with about half a tablespoon of fresh lemon or lime juice per avocado; the California Avocado Board recommends this method, too. Freeze the avocado mash in sealed plastic containers with very little air space.

Jim Peyton is a consultant and menu designer for Mexican restaurants. He's the author of New Cooking from Old Mexico.

Do you have a question of general interest about cooking? Send it to Q&A, *Fine Cooking*, PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506, or by email to fc@taunton.com, and we'll find a cooking professional with the answer.

I used to see references to protein content in bread flour expressed in percentage, but most packages of flour now list it in grams. How do I convert percentage to grams?

—Mike Panzer, via e-mail

A **Maggie Glezer responds:** The conversion from grams to percentage is easy as long as you have a calculator. All the information is listed in the "Nutrition Facts" on the side of the flour package. Just divide the grams of protein per serving by the weight in grams of the serving and multiply by 100. For example, an all-purpose flour might have 3 grams of protein per 30-gram serving; $3 \div 30 = 0.1$; and $0.1 \times 100 = 10$, so this flour has 10% protein.

The protein content tells you the type of recipes for which the flour is best suited. For baguettes, hearth breads, and tender sweet breads, you generally want to use a flour with a relatively low protein content (between 10% and 12%), usually an

all-purpose flour. For most breads, flatbreads, and pizzas, a bread flour of between 11% and 12.5% will give you good results and a slightly chewy bite. For bialys, bagels, and rye breads, where you want the chewiest texture possible, use a flour with a protein level of at least 13%.

Maggie Glezer wrote Artisan Baking Across America. Her new book, on challah, is due out this spring.

Do ceramic knives ever need to be sharpened? If so, with what method or equipment?

—Randy Hearn,
Halifax, Nova Scotia

A **Will Cook responds:** Ceramic knives are made from an industrial-grade ceramic called zirconium oxide, which is second only to diamonds in hardness. Zirconium oxide makes for an extremely hard knife blade that's resistant to dulling and that maintains its razor-sharp edge much longer than steel. Ceramic knives are superb for slicing, but they're not for heftier

tasks like boning or butchering because the blade may chip or break.

With normal home use, a ceramic knife should stay sharp for years. When buying one, check to see if the maker offers a blade-sharpening service. Ceramic knives should be sharpened only by those trained in industrial ceramic sharpening. (If you use a local service, check if it can handle ceramic blades before you hand over your knife.) At home, a fine-grit diamond hone will sharpen a ceramic knife blade, but I don't recommend it. Scratches left by the hone on the blade's surface can result in stress fractures, which could in turn cause the blade to break.

Will Cook is the chief product tester for Professional Cutlery Direct/ Cooking Enthusiast.

How long can I keep baking soda? What are the best storage conditions?

—Lee Ruger, Burnett, Texas

A **Benny Yam responds:** Baking soda is pure sodium bicarbonate, a very stable compound that has a shelf life of three years from the time it's manufactured. All boxes of baking soda have an expiration date stamped on the bottom. At high temperatures and humid conditions, the surface of the baking soda particles will be converted to sodium carbonate, carbon dioxide, and water, leaving it slightly lumpy. This change can negatively affect the taste and texture of baked goods. For this reason, baking soda to be used for cooking should be stored in a relatively cool, dry spot.

Benny Yam is a research and development manager at Church & Dwight Company, Inc., which makes Arm & Hammer Baking Soda. ♦



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Wine & Fish

BY TIM GAISER

Two Approaches to Pairing

Pairing wine with fish is both easy and tricky: Easy in that more often than not, the old axiom—white wine with fish—applies. If a white wine has crisp acidity and is well made, you're probably fine pairing it with most fish. But

the type of fish, the preparation, and the sauce can alter your wine selection—sometimes a red wine might be the best choice (more on that below). But it's all good news. Here's some guidance that will lead you to truly great pairings.

When serving fish simply and unsauced, let the type of fish be your guide

Lighter, flaky fish

such as flounder, snapper, tilapia, and halibut, have a light texture and flavors that want a crisp, dry, unoaked sparkling wine or white wine, or a dry rosé with bright citrus notes and crisp acidity. Look for Pinot Grigio, Sauvignon Blanc, and Riesling, or rosés from southern France.

- ❖ Marco Felluga Pinot Grigio, Italy, \$14
- ❖ 2002 White Oak Sauvignon Blanc, California, \$13
- ❖ 2002 Guigal Tavel Rosé, Côtes du Rhône, France, \$12

Darker, meaty fish

such as swordfish, tuna, and mackerel, have flavors that pair well with medium-bodied red wines that have bright acidity and not too much oak or tannin. Pinot Noir, light Merlots, and lighter Grenache blends are delicious here.

- ❖ 2001 Cambria Pinot Noir, "Julia's Vineyard," Santa Maria, California, \$16
- ❖ 2001 Chateau Souverain Merlot, Alexander Valley, California \$15
- ❖ 2001 Jean-Luc Colombo "Les Forêts" Côtes du Rhône, France, \$10

Salmon

is a crossover fish because it's delicious with white wine yet rich enough to handle many red wines. Let the cooking method guide you first. (If you're serving it with a sauce, see the ideas at right.)

Poached salmon likes bright, high-acid wines aged in stainless steel, like Sauvignon Blanc, Riesling, and sparkling wines. (For my money, rosé Champagne and poached salmon is an unbeatable combination.)

Pan-seared or roasted salmon does well with a richer white wine with a little bit of oak. Chardonnay, dry rosé, or a light red like Pinot Noir all fit the bill.

Grilled salmon can handle red without too much oak or tannin, such as medium-bodied Pinot Noir or light to medium Merlot.

- ❖ 2001 Edna Valley Vineyard Pinot Noir Paragon Vineyard, Edna Valley, California, \$17
- ❖ 2001 Penfolds Rawson's Retreat Merlot, South Australia, \$10

When you add sauce
to the fish,
let the sauce guide you

Butter sauces

and compound butters can handle a heftier white wine. Chardonnay with light to medium oak is a good match for the butter's richness.

- ❖ 2002 Meridian Chardonnay, Santa Barbara, California, \$14
- ❖ 2002 Black Swan Chardonnay, Southeast Australia, \$8

Anchovy, olive, caper sauces

have briny-salty flavors that call for dry white wine or dry rosé with herbal notes. Look for Albariño, a delicious wine from Spain, Gruner Veltliner from Austria, or rosé from France or California.

- ❖ 2002 Martin Codax Albariño, Rias Baixas, Spain, \$13
- ❖ 2002 Hiedler Gruner Veltliner "Loess," Austria, \$14
- ❖ Bergérie de l'Hortus Rosé de Saignée, France, \$12

Citrus vinaigrettes

have a tart acidity that requires an equally crisp white wine with citrus flavors. Sparkling wine, unoaked Sauvignon Blanc, and dry Riesling are all good choices.

- ❖ Domaine Ste. Michelle Blanc de Blancs, Washington, \$10

- ❖ 2003 Huia Sauvignon Blanc, New Zealand, \$15
- ❖ 2002 Donnhoff Estate Riesling, Germany, \$18

Cream sauces

can go in two directions: You can either match the sauce's creaminess with a rich, oaky Chardonnay, or opt for contrast with a medium-bodied, dry Riesling from Alsace or southern Germany.

- ❖ 2002 Dallas Conté Chardonnay, Chile, \$10
- ❖ 2002 Trimbach Riesling, Alsace, France, \$18

Soy, ginger, garlic, sesame sauces

with classic Asian flavors need fruity, crisp wines with a touch of sweetness. The ripe, melony fruit in Oregon Pinot Gris, California Chenin Blanc, and slightly sweet German Rieslings are perfect here.

- ❖ 2002 Elk Cove Pinot Gris, Willamette Valley, Oregon, \$15
- ❖ 2002 Hogue Cellars Chenin Blanc, Washington, \$9
- ❖ 2002 Rheinhold Haart Riesling, Piesporter Goldtropfchen Kabinett, Germany, \$19

Beware brawny red wines

Big red wines—Zinfandel, Barolo, hefty Shiraz—that go well with meat or aged cheese just don't work with fish. Why? Like other lean foods, fish alone can't handle the tannins in robust red wines. But add an intense sauce made with meat stock or red wine, and fish can indeed taste good with a red wine that has some weight. Just steer clear of those big, tannic monsters.

Mastersommelier Tim Gaiser is a contributing editor to Fine Cooking. ♦

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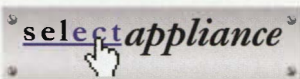
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Capturing Flavor with Infusions

BY KIMBERLY Y. MASIBAY

Infused oils, vinegars, and syrups—created by steeping herbs, spices, fruit, or aromatics in liquid—are perfect for adding big bursts of flavor to food without a lot of work. A splash of raspberry vinegar on a sliced ripe peach or a drizzle of rosemary oil on roasted potatoes is all it takes to elevate a dish from simple to sublime. And when you understand why certain liquids absorb some flavors better than others, making your own infusions will be as easy as using them.

Start with good matchmaking. Infusing is the process of extracting an ingredient's flavor into liquid. Any liquid can be infused—water, oil, vinegar, syrup, wine—but flavors don't dissolve equally well in all liquids. The most flavorful infusions happen when an ingredient meets its ideal fluid (see the chart at far right).

All the tasty ingredients you use in the kitchen get their characteristic flavors from a variety of volatile aromatic chemicals. Some of these flavor compounds are chemically attracted to water; others prefer oil or alcohol. These preferences determine how well an ingredient's flavor will infuse into a liquid.

Consider fresh basil. Put it in water and...yawn...there's literally no chemistry. But when basil meets oil, the result is a heady, basil-scented infusion. The compounds that give basil its characteristic flavor are chemically attracted to fat molecules, so they rush out of the plant and dissolve in the oil. Mint's flavor compounds, on the other hand, prefer water. It's no coincidence that mint tea is one of the world's most popular drinks, and basil tea is virtually unheard of.

oil

Flavors love fat. The natural tendency of most flavors, whether they come from an herb, a spice, or an aromatic like garlic, is to dissolve in fat. So making an infused oil can be as simple as putting an ingredient in oil and letting the flavor compounds do what nature tells them. If it's a good match, the infusion starts to happen in minutes at room temperature, although full flavor extraction can take a couple of hours, depending on the ingredient.

You can speed up the process by chopping the ingredi-

ent in a blender or food processor along with the oil. This liberates flavor compounds from their cell structures, allowing more of them to react with oil molecules at once. And if you add a little heat, it helps release the flavors of dried spices and chiles and sturdy herbs like lavender, rosemary, and oregano. But go easy: Too much heat can destroy flavor compounds.

Make infused oils in small batches and use them right away. If you make infused oils with fresh ingredients, it's best to make only as much as you have immediate

use for. Infused oils taste best when they're fresh because flavor, by nature, is an unstable quality that changes over time. Also, harmful bacteria can grow in infused oils at room temperature.

The main food safety concern is botulism, a rare but dangerous illness caused by a bacterium found in soil. "Anything that grows in or near soil is likely to harbor it," explains Dr. Linda Harris, a food microbiologist at the University of California at Davis. Exposed to air, the bacterium is dormant and harmless. But if it lingers for

weeks in a moist, low-acid, oxygen-free environment, the organism can awaken and multiply. So if you submerge fresh herbs or aromatics in oil and store it at room temperature, you're flirting with botulism. The organism can't survive in acidic liquids (pH less than 4.6), so vinegar poses little risk. And as you'll read in the section on infused syrup, sugar's presence helps prevent bacterial growth.

All this doesn't mean you can't infuse oil with fresh ingredients; you just have to follow the safety tips at right.

syrup

Simmering helps coax out flavors.

Just because a flavor prefers oil doesn't mean it won't dissolve in water, or water-based liquids like sugar syrup. "Many compounds that prefer oil can also dissolve in water to some degree," says flavor chemist Dr. Sara J. Risch.

On p. 52, pastry chef Irit Ishai's recipes for fruit salads feature simple sugar syrups flavored with vanilla, ginger, and rosemary. Vanilla is extremely water soluble, so its flavor comes through loud and clear in syrup. But key flavor compounds in ginger and rosemary don't really want to go into water. To coax them in, Ishai simmers the ingredients in sugar syrup—remember, heat helps ingredients release their volatile flavor compounds. And the sugar

in the syrup acts as a flavor enhancer.

For best flavor, use infused sugar syrups soon after they're made. "The flavor compounds in an infusion react to one another and essentially form new flavor compounds," says Risch. This means the flavor will change over time, possibly for the worse.

If the syrups are refrigerated, bacterial growth isn't a big concern because the sugar in the syrup acts as a preservative. Sugar molecules chemically engage the water molecules, keeping them too busy to interact with microbes. "Even though syrup seems watery, there's actually not much water available for microbes to grow," says Dr. Harris.

Making infusions

The secret to making flavorful infusions is matching ingredients to their favorite liquids. You can always experiment, but here are some matches that work.

	oil (neutral flavored)	vinegar (mild)	syrup
basil	•		
black pepper	•	•	
caraway	•		
dried chiles	•		
garlic	•		
ginger	•	•	•
lemon, orange, and other citrus peel	•		
peppermint	•	•	•
raspberries, blackberries, blueberries		•	
rosemary	•	•	•
tarragon	•	•	
thyme	•		
vanilla bean	•	•	•

Infusion safety tips

Follow these guidelines for all infusions, whether oil, sugar syrup, or vinegar.

- ❖ Use sterilized jars, just as you would when canning.
- ❖ Thoroughly wash and dry all herbs and produce.
- ❖ As soon as the flavor has developed, strain out the ingredient until the liquid is clear. Coffee filters, rinsed and squeezed dry, are ideal; a cheesecloth-lined sieve will do.
- ❖ Use your infusions right away. Store any extra in the refrigerator. Use oils within 10 days, syrups within a few weeks, vinegars within 3 or 4 months.
- ❖ Discard any infusion that shows signs of spoilage, for example, bubbles, mold growth, or off odors.

vinegar

The secret is time.

Just as water isn't the world's greatest flavor extractor, neither is vinegar. When chemists talk about infusions, they actually consider water and vinegar as one and the same; most vinegars are about 95 percent water and 5 percent acetic acid. "Acid doesn't have a big influence in terms of extraction," explains Risch.

Berries infuse quickly into vinegar—their flavors are naturally attracted to water—but it can take

weeks or longer to infuse many herbs and spices into vinegar because they don't want to release their flavor compounds into that medium. Eventually, though, some of their flavor will go. "Steeping time is what matters most with vinegars," says Kevin Vetter, corporate chef at McCormick, the spice company.

To hurry things along, crack spices or bruise herb leaves before dousing them in vinegar. This frees their flavors from the cell struc-

tures. You might also heat the vinegar to the temperature of a hot bath before pouring it over the fruit, herbs, or spices.

Although the infusion can take a while, flavored vinegars do keep well at room temperature because the acid inhibits the microbial growth that can quickly spoil flavored oils. But as with oils and syrups, if you love the flavor of an infused vinegar, use it sooner rather than later because its flavor will change over time.

Kimberly Masibay is an associate editor for Fine Cooking. ♦



WINNING TIP

Grill chicken in a cake pan

Everyone knows about beer-can chicken, but what about cake-pan chicken? I rub a whole chicken, inside and out, with olive oil, crushed garlic, salt, and pepper; and then I slide the tail end of the chicken over the hollow tube of a heavy-duty angel food pan. (The pan shouldn't have a removable bottom.) I pour $\frac{1}{2}$ cup each of chicken broth and white wine into the pan, set it on a hot grill, and close the lid. The chicken cooks evenly, and the cake pan catches flavorful drippings, which you can use to make a sauce.

—Linda Hildahl, Sioux City, Iowa

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Keeping strawberries fresh

I find that if I can keep moisture away from fresh strawberries, they'll last longer. So when I bring them home from the market, I put the unwashed berries into a bowl lined with paper towels and cover them with another paper towel. I store the bowl in the refrigerator, and the berries stay fresh all week—no problem with mildew. Whenever I want berries, I take some out and wash them.

—Ruth McHugh,
North Port, Florida

Steam-clean a Pyrex pan

I prepared one of Susie Middleton's roast chicken recipes from *Fine Cooking* #62 (p. 50) in a 9x13-inch Pyrex baking dish. The chicken was absolutely delicious, but cooking in Pyrex can have a serious drawback: scrubbing off cooked-on bits afterwards. To make the job easier, I filled the pan halfway with water, covered it with plastic wrap, and micro-

waved it for 5 minutes. Then I let the dish sit for a few minutes, covered, so the steam could go to work on the gunk. When I poured off the hot water, I was able to wash the pan with a minimum of elbow grease.

—Julia Robinson,
Nashville, Tennessee

White eggs this week, brown eggs next

I buy eggs weekly and store them in a special container in my refrigerator. I buy white eggs one week and brown the next, so if I don't use all the eggs in a week's time, it's easy to tell the difference between the older eggs and the fresher ones.

—Elfi Norris,
Palm Coast, Florida

Steam vegetables in a sauté pan

If you want to steam a big batch of vegetables, a deep saucepan won't do. The veggies on the bottom will overcook while you

wait for the ones on top to get done. Instead, use a wide sauté pan. Food steams more evenly in a wide, shallow space. When you set a standard collapsible steamer into a sauté pan, the steamer will open wide enough to hold lots of vegetables. If you don't have a lid for the pan, just cover it with foil.

—Pam Anderson,
Darien, Connecticut

Plant leftover rosemary

It's easy to turn a leftover rosemary sprig into a rosemary plant. Just make an angled cut through the sprig, at a point where a leaf meets the stem, so that you're left with a 3-inch long cutting. Then, strip the leaves from the bottom half of this cutting and place it in potting soil in a 3-inch pot, and dampen the soil with water. Seal the pot in a zip-top bag (as in a closed terrarium, the moisture will recycle). Set the pot near a window, out of direct sunlight. In a few months, when the rosemary

begins to grow, you can remove it from the bag and plant it outside, if weather permits.

—Irene Ong,
Madison, Wisconsin

A coffee lover's remedy for unpleasant cooking odors

I love to cook fish, but I'm not crazy about the odor that lingers in my home afterwards. Instead of resorting to aerosol sprays, I set out small dishes of freshly ground coffee beans in every room where the smell might linger. The result is fabulous. The coffee seems to absorb the fish odors, and my home fills with the wonderful aroma of coffee.

—Dale Holman,
Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts

Frozen butter + box grater = perfect pastry

When I make short-crust pastry, I freeze the butter for a day or so until it's very hard. Then I grate the frozen butter (on the coarse side of an ordinary box grater) over the flour. This ensures that the fat is truly cold. And the flakes of grated butter mix so quickly into the flour, there's no chance of overworking the dough.

—Christopher Bird,
Irving, Texas

Roll dough on a cold board

While my freshly made pie dough rests in the refrigerator, I put a large cutting board and rolling pin in the freezer to chill. When I roll out the dough on the cold board, I have no problem with the dough sticking.

—Curtis McMurtrie,
Bedford, Massachusetts

Pit cherries with a hairpin

I've tried many cherry-pitting devices, and most tend to mash the cherries and allow small pits to pass through. A better (and cheaper) tool is a large,

sturdy metal hairpin. Simply insert the looped end of the pin into the stem end of the cherry, down to the bottom of the pit, and with a twist of your wrist, flip it out. It does little damage to the cherries' shape, and every pit gets removed, since you pit the cherries one at a time. To make the hairpin easier to use, you can press the ends into the flat end of a Champagne cork and use the round end as a handle.

—Rose Levy Beranbaum,
New York, New York

Pruning shears make quick work of chicken

I bought an extra pair of pruning shears for use in my kitchen. I use it to cut whole chicken into pieces. The soft handles are comfortable, and the shears are strong enough to slice through the toughest joints with ease.

—Shirley Schoenlein,
Au Gres, Michigan

Drying a spinner basket

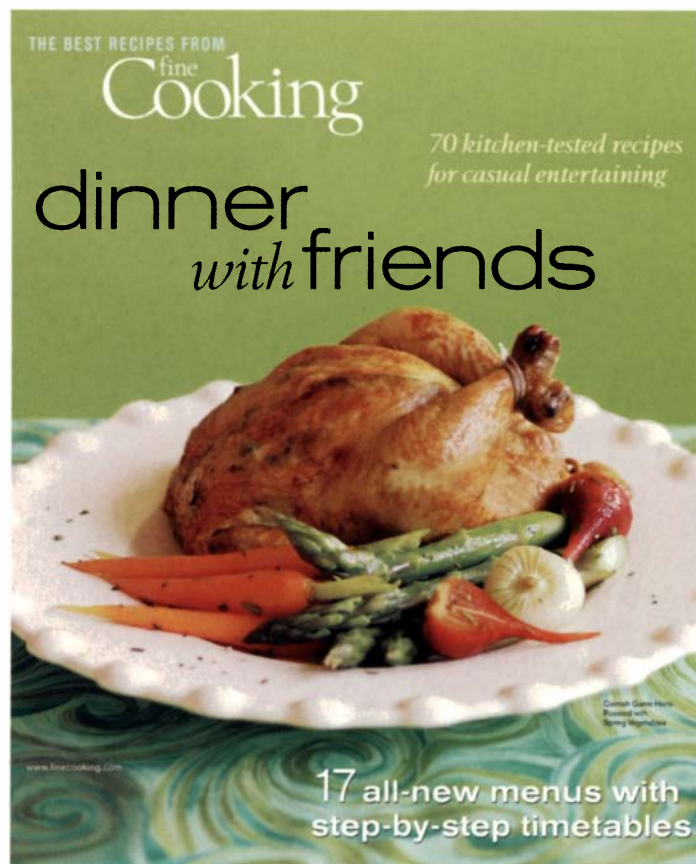
Here's a fast way to dry a salad spinner basket: After washing, return it to the spinner and give it a whirl. The water flies off the basket and onto the outer bowl, which is much easier to towel-dry than the basket.

—Vicki McLain,
Baytown, Texas

Clean the bowl—and make flavorful breadcrumbs, too

After I make pesto in my food processor, I toss a few hunks of bread into the empty bowl and pulse. The bread absorbs the oil and basil residue from the bowl, which makes clean-up much easier. And the oil gives a wonderful flavor to the crumbs, which you can use as a savory crumb topping or breading.

—Dawn Fanucchi,
Foster City, California ♦



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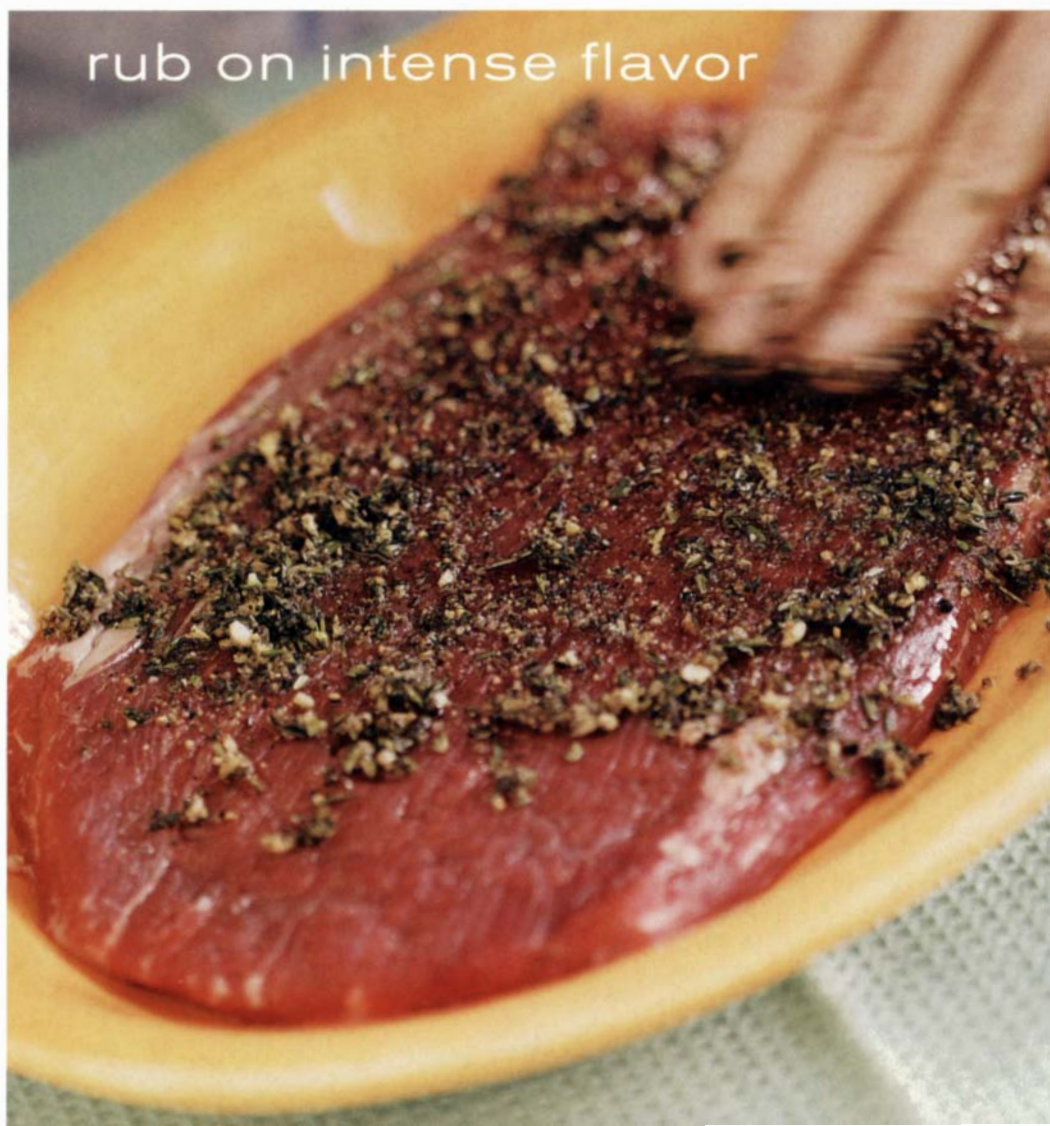
Flank Steak, Rubbed Grilled Sauced

BY STEVE JOHNSON

Flank steak is among the juiciest and the tastiest beef cuts I know; it's one of my favorites. Flank takes beautifully to just the sorts of punchy flavors—zippy spice rubs, sassy vinaigrettes—that I find myself craving when the weather finally turns warm again. And when grilled, flank tastes its very best.

The quick rubs and chunky sauces I use to flavor flank steak couldn't be easier to make. The recipes I've included here take their cues from Mediterranean, Middle Eastern, and Latin flavors, all warm-weather cuisines where the grill plays a big role. I start by assembling a full-flavored spice rub that stands up to the grill's smoky overlay, and then I figure out an easy, sensible accompaniment that would speak to the kicky flavors in the rub. No need for advance planning or lots of time in the kitchen—a real boon in summer.

Cooking the inside properly without overcooking the outside is always my main thought when I grill flank steak. So at the grill, you'll need to back off on intensity: Instead of using a super-hot fire, reduce the heat (or find a more moderate spot on the grill) and turn the steak every couple of minutes. That may sound counterintuitive, since many recipes advise searing steak on one side and then the other and not fiddling with it too much. But this gentler approach allows the relatively thin steak to cook to the doneness you like before the exterior turns black and dries out, and it helps the juices stay evenly distributed.





top with a zesty condiment

Mediterranean-Style Flank Steak

Serves four to six.

This rub is a wet one; the oil helps the other flavors spread.

- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil**
- 2 medium cloves garlic, minced**
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh aromatic herbs (thyme, sage, rosemary, marjoram, or a mix)**
- 1 tablespoon kosher salt**
- 1 tablespoon ground black pepper**
- 1½- to 2-pound flank steak, trimmed of any excess fat and membrane**
- 1 recipe Chunky Tomato-Basil Vinaigrette (at right)**

Mix the oil, garlic, herbs, salt, and pepper in a small bowl. Rub all over the steak and let sit for about 20 minutes at room temperature. Meanwhile, heat a gas grill to medium high (you should be able to hold your

hand 2 inches above the grate for 3 to 4 seconds) or prepare a medium-hot charcoal fire. If your grill has a hot spot, position the thicker end of the flank steak nearer the hottest part of the fire. Grill until medium rare, 12 to 15 minutes, turning the steak every 3 to 4 minutes to ensure even cooking. The thickest part of the steak will register 135° to 140°F on an instant-read thermometer. Transfer the steak to a cutting board and let it rest for 3 to 5 minutes. Slice as you like (see the box on p. 47). Portion onto dinner plates, spoon on the vinaigrette, and serve.

drink choices

Pour a light, fruity Côtes du Rhône blend, or a Grenache-based rosé.

Chunky Tomato-Basil Vinaigrette

Yields a generous 2 cups.

- 1¼ to 1½ pounds fresh ripe plum tomatoes, seeded and cut into ½-inch dice (2 cups)**
- 1 large or 2 medium shallots, thinly sliced**
- ¼ cup lightly packed chopped fresh basil**
- ⅓ cup red-wine vinegar**
- ¾ cup extra-virgin olive oil**
- ¾ teaspoon kosher salt; more to taste**
- Freshly ground black pepper to taste**

Toss all the ingredients together in a medium bowl, taking care not to rough up the tomatoes too much. You'll need to use a fair amount of salt to bring out the flavor of the tomatoes. The vinaigrette should have a slightly peppery bite. Set aside at room temperature until serving time.

The tomato-basil vinaigrette can be made up to three hours ahead.



Chipotle butter gives richness and subtle heat

Wrapped well, left-over chipotle butter will keep for a month in the freezer. It's delicious on hamburgers, grilled pork tenderloin, and corn on the cob.

Latin-Style Flank Steak

Serves four to six.

The flavors here are earthy and satisfying, and they mingle beautifully with the spicy heat of the chipotle butter.

FOR THE RUB:

2½ tablespoons ground cumin
1 tablespoon chili powder
1 tablespoon ground coriander
1½ teaspoons freshly ground black pepper
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
½ teaspoon dried oregano

FOR THE STEAK:

1½- to 2-pound flank steak, trimmed of any excess fat and membrane
1 teaspoon olive oil
1 teaspoon kosher salt
1 recipe Chipotle Butter (at right)

Make the rub: Mix all the rub ingredients in a small bowl.

Grill the steak: Half an hour before grilling, coat the steak with the oil and pat on all of the rub, coating evenly. Heat a gas grill to medium high (you should be able to hold your hand 2 inches above

the grate for 3 to 4 seconds) or prepare a medium-hot charcoal fire. Sprinkle both sides of the steak with the salt. If your grill has a hot spot, position the thicker end of the flank steak nearer the hottest part of the fire. Grill until medium rare, 12 to 15 minutes, turning the steak every 3 to 4 minutes to ensure even cooking. The thickest part of the steak will register 135° to 140°F on an instant-read thermometer. Transfer the steak to a cutting board and let it rest for 3 to 5 minutes. Slice as you like (see the box on p. 47). Portion among dinner plates. Immediately cut the chilled butter into ¼-inch slices and set a slice or two on each serving while the steak is warm, using a scant tablespoon butter per serving.

drink choices

Beer is the beverage best suited to the variety of strong, smoky flavors here. A pale ale would be great.

Chipotle Butter

Yields about 8 tablespoons.

You'll find chipotles—smoked jalapeños—canned in adobo sauce in the Mexican or imported food section of well-stocked supermarkets.

¼ pound (½ cup) unsalted butter, completely softened at room temperature
2 canned chipotle chiles in adobo, stemmed, seeded, and minced
2 tablespoons fresh lime juice
Scant teaspoon ground cumin
½ teaspoon kosher salt; more to taste

In a small bowl, cream the butter with a wooden spoon until smooth. Add the chipotles, lime juice, cumin, and salt, blending until evenly incorporated. Taste and add more salt if needed. Using plastic wrap to shape and smooth, mold the butter into a log about 1½ inches in diameter. Wrap well in plastic and transfer to the refrigerator (or freezer, if you're in a hurry) to firm.



With its lengthwise grain, flank steak starts out long and shrinks a bit during grilling.

What is flank?

Flank steak isn't really a steak at all, but actually an entire cut of meat; it's a long muscle found along the belly just below the rib cage. At the market, you'll generally see flanks that weigh between 1½ to 2 pounds. The meat is quite lean, with a fatter end and a tapered end. Look for bright-red meat that looks moist. Any bits of fat should be chalky white.

The grain of the flank steak runs lengthwise from end to end, and during cooking, the steak will shrink noticeably, unlike other steaks where the grain has already been cut short when the steaks were cut from a whole muscle.



To shape an even, smooth log of the chipotle butter, push the side of your hand against the plastic wrap.

reader review

A *Fine Cooking* reader gave these recipes a real-world test. Here are the results:

"I'm a huge fan of steak, and in Texas, we eat a lot of it—but this Latin-style flank steak was possibly the most intensely flavored one I've ever had. In fact, I'll be making it at my next dinner party. I love to serve a dish that tastes more complicated than it really is."

—Dawn McMullan,
Dallas, Texas



Eggplant compote adds creamy texture and earthiness

Flaky Aleppo pepper is worth seeking out for the rub; its heat doesn't overpower its fruity pepper flavors. If you can't find Aleppo, hot paprika is a good stand-in.

Middle Eastern–Style Flank Steak

Serves four to six.

FOR THE RUB:

- 3 tablespoons Aleppo pepper** (for sources, see p. 82) or **2 tablespoons Hungarian hot paprika**
- 2 tablespoons ground coriander**
- 1 tablespoon ground cumin**
- 2 teaspoons dried mint**
- ½ teaspoon ground nutmeg**
- ½ teaspoon ground allspice** (or ¼ teaspoon each ground cloves and ground cinnamon)

FOR THE STEAK:

- 1½- to 2-pound flank steak**, trimmed of any excess fat and membrane
- 1 teaspoon olive oil**
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt**
- 1 recipe Eggplant Compote** (at right)

Make the rub: Mix all the rub ingredients in a small bowl.

Grill the steak: Half an hour before grilling, coat the steak with the oil and pat the rub all over, coating evenly, using all the rub. Heat a gas grill to medium high (you should be able to hold your

hand 2 inches above the grate for 3 to 4 seconds) or prepare a medium-hot charcoal fire. Sprinkle both sides of the steak with the salt. If your grill has a hot spot, position the thicker end of the flank steak nearer the hottest part of the fire. Grill until medium rare, 12 to 15 minutes, turning the steak every 3 to 4 minutes to ensure even cooking. The thickest part of the steak will register 135° to 140°F on an instant-read thermometer. Transfer the steak to a cutting board and let it rest for 3 to 5 minutes. Slice the steak as you like (see the box at far right). Portion among dinner plates, spoon some of the eggplant compote over the slices, and serve, passing the remaining compote at the table.

drink choices

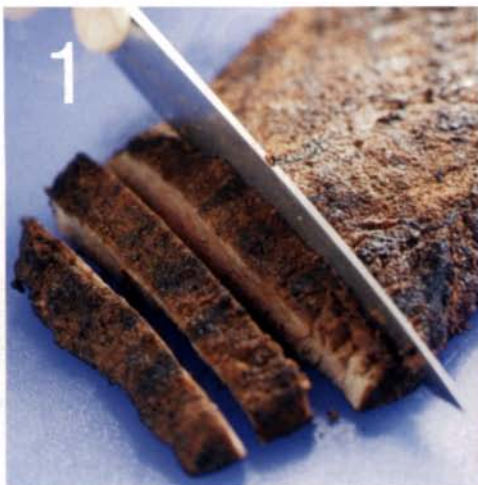
Go for a light, fruity red wine. A Shiraz blend or a Gamay-based wine like Beaujolais-Villages would fit the bill.

Eggplant Compote

Yields about 2 cups.

- 1 large or 2 medium shallots**, thinly sliced
- 1 tablespoon vinegar** (red-wine, sherry, or balsamic)
- 1 medium eggplant** (about 1 pound), peeled and sliced ½ inch thick crosswise
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil**
- Pinch ground cumin**
- Pinch ground coriander**
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt**; more to taste
- A few grinds black pepper**
- 1 tablespoon each chopped fresh parsley and mint**

Toss the shallots and vinegar in a medium bowl; set aside. Prepare a medium grill fire. Put the eggplant in a bowl and sprinkle with 2 tablespoons of the oil, the cumin, coriander, salt, and pepper; toss to coat. Grill until well browned and softened, 3 to 5 minutes per side. When cool, cut into ½-inch dice. Toss in the bowl with the shallots; add the herbs. Transfer to a serving bowl. Drizzle with the remaining 2 tablespoons oil, season with salt, and serve.



The angle on slicing flank steak

The best way to slice flank steak inspires heated debate among meat lovers and grill hounds. You'll always need to cut across the grain, but the question is, do you position the knife blade straight down or angle it? There are two approaches.

1 CUTTING STRAIGHT DOWN at 1/2-inch intervals produces thick, meaty slices that allow for the best juice retention. They're also quite chewy, but author Steve Johnson has a strong preference for flank steak cut this way. "I'll take a chewier bite if it means juicier meat," he says. Flank steak sliced straight down stays juicier if it's sitting on a platter while you're serving and enjoying a leisurely supper.

2 CUTTING AT AN ANGLE into thinner pieces produces more delicate slices of meat, which many people find more pleasant to eat. Thinner, more angled slices are easier to chew, but the downside is that the meat dries out more quickly.



For the best texture, drizzle the eggplant compote with the remaining olive oil just before serving.

Steve Johnson, a Boston-area chef, does lots of summertime grilling on the southern Massachusetts coastline. ♦

Zucchini Loves

A few simple tricks and a hot sauté pan or grill give zucchini the perfect texture for quick summer side dishes

BY TONY ROSENFELD

A while ago, I resolved never to cook mushy zucchini again. Easier said than done. The vegetable's water content is so high, it seems destined to cook into a sodden mess. But I've figured out how to prevent that, and now my cooked zucchini is always pleasingly firm and meaty. Here's my secret: Before I let the vegetable touch a hot pan or grill, I slice it and salt it to draw out some of the water. Then I cook it quickly over dry, high heat to caramelize the flesh before it has a chance to steam and get soggy.

Slice and salt zucchini before cooking.

I start by quartering the zucchini lengthwise and cutting off the top of its seed core—that spongy part that immediately turns to mush when it encounters heat. I salt the zucchini quarters and let them rest for about 10 minutes in a colander. The salt pulls a good deal of water from the zucchini and also starts to season the vegetable. Then I dry the zucchini well with paper towels and cook it.

Dry-heat cooking generally suits zucchini best. Grilling or sautéing sears the vegetable and allows you to cook it quickly and avoid the dreaded mush. I generally grill and sauté zucchini unadorned and then toss the cooked vegetable with other garden-fresh ingredients and flavorful accents like fresh basil or thyme, olives or sun-dried tomatoes, and cheeses like Parmigiano Reggiano or ricotta salata.



Basic method for slicing and salting zucchini



Wash the zucchini well to remove any grit and dry them with paper towels. Trim off the ends and quarter the zucchini lengthwise. Slice off the top $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of the soft seed core by running a sharp knife down the length of each quarter; it's all right if some of the seeds remain. Arrange the zucchini, cut side up, on a baking sheet lined with paper towels. Sprinkle with kosher salt (about $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon per 1 pound of zucchini) and set aside for 10 minutes. Blot the quarters dry with the paper towels.

High Heat



Sautéed Zucchini with Sun-Dried Tomatoes & Basil

Serves four as a side dish.

- 3 small or 2 medium zucchini (about 1 pound)**
- Kosher salt**
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil**
- 2 cloves garlic, smashed and peeled**
- 2 oil-packed sun-dried tomatoes, drained and finely diced**
- 6 fresh basil leaves, torn into large pieces**
- Freshly ground black pepper**
- 1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice**

Slice and salt the zucchini following the instructions at left. Cut each quarter on the diagonal into $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch-thick diamonds.

Heat a large (preferably 12-inch) skillet over medium-high heat for 1 minute. Pour in 2 tablespoons of the oil. When the oil is hot, add the zucchini and garlic, and sauté, stirring occasionally, until the zucchini browns and softens enough that you can cut through it with the side of a fork, about 5 minutes. Take the pan off the heat, toss in the sun-dried tomatoes and basil, and season generously with salt and pepper. Drizzle with the lemon juice and the remaining 1 tablespoon oil and serve immediately.



Grilled Zucchini with Lemon-Balsamic Vinaigrette

Serves four as a side dish.

- 3 small or 2 medium zucchini (about 1 pound)**
- Kosher salt**
- 2 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon extra-virgin olive oil**
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar**
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon chopped fresh thyme**
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon finely grated lemon zest**
- Freshly ground black pepper**
- 3 tablespoons freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano**

Slice and salt the zucchini following the instructions at left. Heat a gas grill to medium high

or prepare a medium-hot charcoal fire. In a small bowl, whisk 2 tablespoons of the oil, the vinegar, thyme, lemon zest, $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt, and $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon pepper.

Toss the zucchini with the remaining 1 teaspoon olive oil. Set the zucchini cut side down on the grill and cook (if using a gas grill, keep the lid closed), flipping occasionally, until it browns and softens but doesn't turn mushy, 6 to 8 minutes. Cut the zucchini into 3-inch pieces and put in a medium bowl. Whisk the vinaigrette again and drizzle over the zucchini. Sprinkle on the Parmigiano, toss well, adjust the seasonings to taste, and serve immediately.

Make a meal of the
couscous by serving it
with grilled shrimp.



Warm Couscous & Grilled Zucchini Salad

Serves four as a side dish.

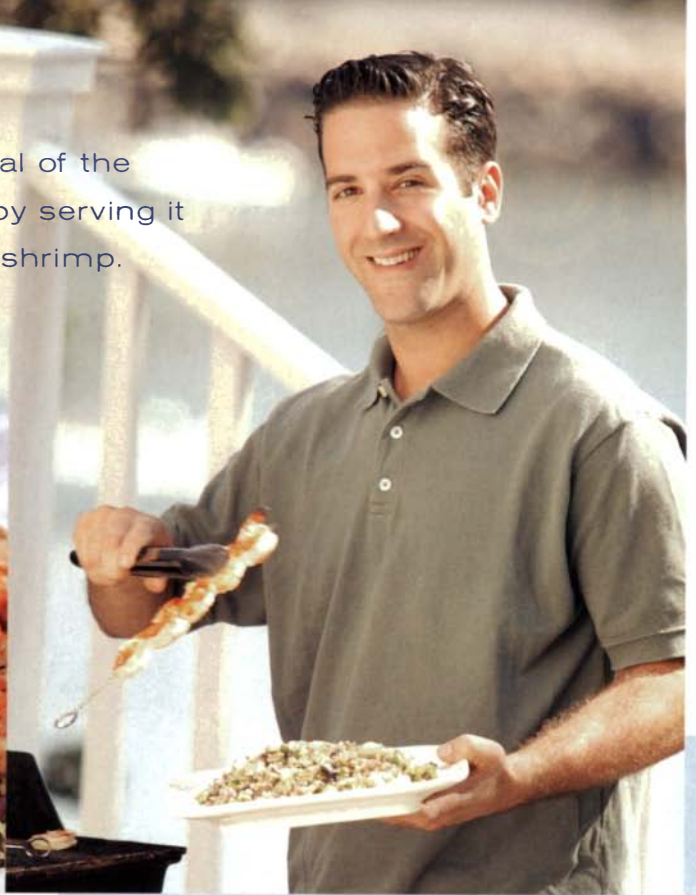
3 small or 2 medium zucchini
(about 1 pound)
Kosher salt
2 teaspoons ground cumin
2 teaspoons packed light brown sugar
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
Pinch cayenne
Freshly ground black pepper
1 large red onion, sliced into ½-inch disks and each slice threaded on two thin skewers
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
7½ ounces couscous (1¼ cups)
¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro
1 tablespoon finely grated orange zest
2 tablespoons fresh orange juice; more to taste

Slice and salt the zucchini following the instructions on p. 48. Heat a gas grill to medium high or prepare a medium-hot charcoal fire. In a small bowl, mix the cumin, brown sugar, cinnamon, cayenne, 1 teaspoon salt, and ¼ teaspoon pepper. In a medium bowl, gently toss the zucchini quarters with 1 tablespoon olive

oil and the spice mix. Let sit for 10 minutes. Lay the onions on a tray or platter, brush both sides with 1 tablespoon of the olive oil, and sprinkle with a little salt.

Meanwhile, bring 1½ cups water to a boil in a large saucepan. Stir in the couscous, 2 tablespoons of the olive oil, and ¾ teaspoon salt. Cover, remove from the heat, and set aside.

Set the zucchini cut side down on the grill and cook (if using a gas grill, keep the lid closed), flipping occasionally, until it browns and softens but doesn't turn mushy, 6 to 8 minutes. Return the zucchini to its original bowl and toss to pick up any spices clinging to it. Reduce the heat to medium (if using a charcoal grill, put on the lid and partially close air vents). Grill the onions until soft and slightly charred, 8 to 10 minutes. Coarsely chop the zucchini and onions and stir them into the couscous, along with the cilantro, orange zest, and orange juice. Taste for salt and pepper; add a little more orange juice to taste. Serve immediately.



Tony's tips for fantastic zucchini

❖ **Choose little zucchini.** Their flesh is firm, not pithy, and it browns without turning to mush.

❖ **Wash zucchini well.** To remove grit, I rinse the zucchini well and wipe down the skin with a cloth or paper towel.

❖ **Don't move the zucchini much while cooking.** This gives the exterior a chance to develop a deep golden color.

❖ **Serve cooked zucchini dishes immediately.** Cooked zucchini softens as it sits, which isn't necessarily bad, but it detracts from the perfect texture you've worked to achieve.



Spicy Hoisin-Glazed Zucchini

Serves four as a side dish.

3 small or 2 medium zucchini
(about 1 pound)
Kosher salt
1 tablespoon soy sauce
2 teaspoons hoisin sauce
2 teaspoons dry sherry
½ teaspoon toasted sesame oil
2 tablespoons peanut or canola oil
1 clove garlic, minced (about 1 teaspoon)
Pinch crushed red chile flakes
½ teaspoon toasted sesame seeds

Slice and salt the zucchini following the instructions on p. 48. Cut the zucchini into 2-inch lengths.

In a small bowl, mix the soy sauce, hoisin, sherry, and sesame oil. Set a large (preferably 12-inch) skillet over medium-high heat for 1 minute. Pour in the peanut or canola oil; when it's very hot (it should shimmer and ripple), add the zucchini. Sauté, stirring occasionally, until the zucchini browns and softens but doesn't turn mushy, about 4 minutes. Add the garlic and chile flakes and sauté for 15 seconds. Add the soy mixture and cook, stirring, just long enough for the liquid to reduce and coat the zucchini, about 20 seconds. Sprinkle with the sesame seeds and serve immediately.

Try this zesty sauté with barbecued spareribs and steamed rice.

Liven up zucchini with potatoes and bold chili spices.



Sautéed Tex-Mex Zucchini & Potatoes

Serves four as a side dish.

3 small or 2 medium zucchini
(about 1 pound)
Kosher salt
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
1 large russet potato (about ¾ pound), peeled and cut into ¼-inch dice (about 1½ cups)
Freshly ground black pepper
¼ red bell pepper, finely diced (about ¼ cup)
2 cloves garlic, minced (about 1 tablespoon)
½ teaspoon chili powder
3 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro

Slice and salt the zucchini following the instructions on p. 48. Cut the zucchini into ¾-inch dice.

Heat a large skillet (preferably 12 inches wide and cast iron) over medium-high heat for 1 minute. Pour in 2 tablespoons

of the oil, add the zucchini, and sauté, stirring occasionally, until the zucchini browns and softens enough that you can cut through it with the side of a fork, about 4 minutes. Transfer to a large plate. Carefully dry the hot skillet with a paper towel. Add the remaining 2 tablespoons olive oil and the potato; season with ¾ teaspoon salt and a few generous grinds of black pepper. Sauté, stirring occasionally, until the potatoes brown and cook through, about 7 minutes. Add the red pepper, garlic, and chili powder and sauté for 1 minute. Stir in the zucchini and cilantro and taste for salt and pepper. Serve immediately.

Tony Rosenfeld is a contributing editor to Fine Cooking. ♦

Use Flavor-Infused Syrups to Make Exceptional

BY IRIT ISHAI

When was the last time you had a truly enjoyable fruit salad? In my experience, they are few and far between. Most versions are a mishmash of randomly tossed together fruit—neither attractive nor delicious—which is a shame because fresh fruit salads can be lovely desserts. To ensure that mine live up to their full potential, I employ two simple tricks: I follow certain rules about which fruits can go together, and I toss the fruit with an infused syrup to add an unexpected but complementary flavor twist.

Keep related fruits together. I like to put berries with berries, melons with melons, stone fruit with stone fruit. This “like with like” approach might be surprising—contrast and variety is usually a good thing—but with fruit salads, choosing similar fruits makes a more texturally appealing dessert. When you start tossing lots of very diverse fruits together, their textures tend to blur (think crisp apple tossed with ripe banana) and you lose the sense of each individual fruit’s character.

Within one category of fruit, there are usually enough options to keep the flavors interesting. In the berry family, you’ve got strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, and blackberries. There are half a dozen or more melons to choose from for a melon salad; stone fruits include peaches, nectarines, apricots,



Drizzle on an infused sugar syrup for a fragrant finish. A vanilla-bean syrup is a perfect match for this mixed berry salad.

Fruit Salads

Mixed Berries with Vanilla Bean Syrup

Serves four to six; yields 1/3 cup syrup.

1/2 vanilla bean
1/4 cup granulated sugar
1/4 cup water
1 pint (2 cups) fresh raspberries
1 pint (2 cups) fresh blueberries
1 pint (2 cups) fresh blackberries
1/2 pint (1 cup) fresh strawberries

Split the vanilla bean in half lengthwise with a sharp paring knife and scrape out the seeds with the back of the knife; save the empty pod for a garnish, if you like. Put the seeds in a small saucepan, along with the sugar and water. Bring to a simmer over medium heat, stirring occasionally until the sugar dissolves. Reduce the heat to low and cook for 7 minutes to let the vanilla infuse. Strain through a fine sieve to remove any fibrous pieces of vanilla pod or clumps of seeds. Let cool and refrigerate until completely chilled.

Rinse the raspberries, blueberries, and blackberries and spread them in a single layer on a towel to dry. Hull the strawberries and cut them into quarters.

Just before serving, combine all the berries in a large serving bowl and pour on just enough of the vanilla syrup to lightly coat them, about 3 tablespoons. Toss gently.

Peaches & Nectarines with Rosemary & Honey Syrup

Serves six; yields 3/4 cup syrup.

1/4 cup honey
1/4 cup granulated sugar
1/2 cup water
1 sprig (4 1/2 inches long) fresh rosemary; more for garnish
4 medium white or yellow peaches (or 2 of each)
4 medium white or yellow nectarines (or 2 of each)

Combine the honey, sugar, and water in a small saucepan. Bring to a simmer over medium heat, stirring occasionally until the sugar dissolves. Add the rosemary and reduce the heat to low. Cook for 7 minutes to let the rosemary infuse. Strain through a fine sieve, let cool, and refrigerate to chill completely.

Just before serving, halve and pit the peaches and nectarines. Cut the fruit into 1/4-inch slices and put them in a large serving bowl. Pour on just enough of the rosemary syrup to lightly coat the fruit, about 6 tablespoons. Garnish with fresh sprigs of rosemary, if you like.

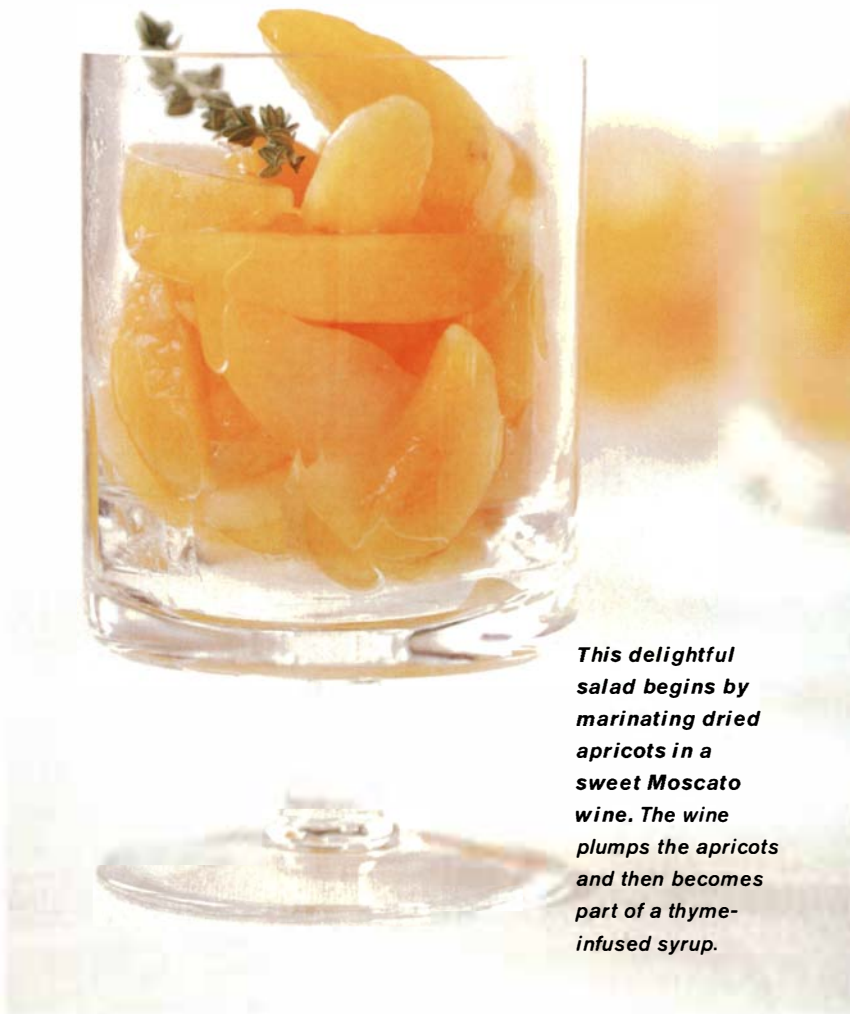
Similar fruits make pleasing salads. Nectarines and peaches, both stone fruit, work well together because of their similar textures.



pluots, and plums (plus specific varieties, such as red plums, black plums, Italian plums). You could make a tropical fruit salad with a variety of papayas and mangos, or one with pineapple, kiwi, and starfruit.

An infused syrup gives an aromatic accent. To deliver a subtle aroma and intriguing flavor, I toss the fruit with a sugar syrup that I've infused with a complementary flavor. In the recipes here, I've chosen fresh ginger, fresh rosemary, fresh thyme, and vanilla bean. You could also try mint or tarragon or another fresh herb, lemon zest or another citrus zest, lemongrass, or even lavender. (For more on making infusions, see Food Science, p. 38.) The one caveat with infused syrups is to not use too much. The more you add, the sweeter the salad will be, and that's good, but only up to a point.

Make and serve. I won't lie to you: Fruit salads aren't great make-ahead desserts. Ripe, fresh fruit starts to break down fairly quickly after it has been cut up, so plan on making them just before serving (although the syrups should be made ahead and chilled). If you do need to prepare them an hour or so ahead, put each fruit variety in its own bowl and keep refrigerated.



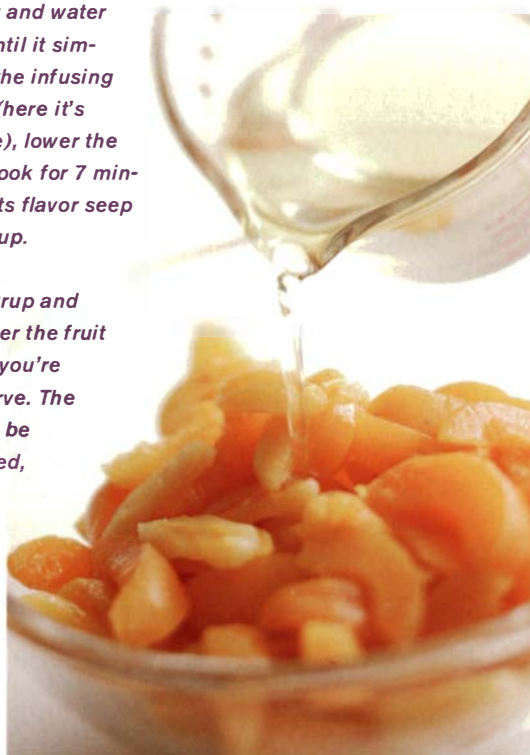
This delightful salad begins by marinating dried apricots in a sweet Moscato wine. The wine plumps the apricots and then becomes part of a thyme-infused syrup.

Infused sugar syrups transform simple fruit salads



Heat sugar and water (or wine) until it simmers. Add the infusing ingredient (here it's fresh thyme), lower the heat, and cook for 7 minutes to let its flavor seep into the syrup.

Chill the syrup and drizzle it over the fruit just before you're ready to serve. The fruit should be lightly coated, not soupy.



Infused syrups keep for two weeks in the refrigerator. Use extra syrup in iced tea, lemonade, smoothies, or yogurt.

Apricots with Moscato & Thyme Syrup

Serves four to six; yields 1 cup syrup.

Moscato can be expensive, but there are delicious, affordable examples, such as Sutter Home Moscato, that work well in this recipe. A pluot is a cross between a plum and apricot; for more about this fruit, see *From Our Test Kitchen*, p. 77.

2 to 3 cups Moscato or Moscato d'Asti (or any dessert wine made from Muscat grapes)

5 ounces dried apricots (15 to 20)

5 tablespoons granulated sugar

4 sprigs fresh thyme; more for garnish

2 pounds fresh apricots or pluots (about 16 apricots or 7 medium pluots)

In a small saucepan, bring 2 cups of the wine to a boil. Remove from the heat and add the dried apricots. Cover the pan and let the apricots marinate in the wine for at least 8 hours, or overnight.

Strain the wine from the marinated fruit into a measuring cup. You'll need a total of 1 cup wine; if you have less, supplement with more wine from the bottle. If you have more, discard the extra. Combine the 1 cup wine and the sugar in a small saucepan. Bring to a simmer over medium heat, stirring occasionally until the sugar dissolves. Add the thyme and reduce the heat to low. Cook for 7 minutes to let the thyme infuse. Strain through a fine sieve, let cool, and refrigerate until completely chilled.

Just before serving, cut the plumped dried apricots into quarters, slicing them lengthwise. Cut the fresh apricots or pluots in half, pit them, and slice each half into ½-inch-wide wedges. Put all the fruit in a large serving bowl. Pour on just enough of the Moscato syrup to lightly coat the fruit, about ⅓ cup. Garnish with fresh sprigs of thyme, if you like.

Irit Ishai is the pastry chef and owner of Sugar Butter Flour bakery in Santa Clara, California. ♦

Melons with Ginger Syrup

Serves four to six; yields about ⅓ cup syrup.

For this salad, I like to use a combination of four melons, choosing from cantaloupe, honeydew, Santa Claus, Persian, casaba, or seedless watermelon.

¼ cup granulated sugar

¼ cup water

3½-inch-long piece fresh ginger (1 inch wide), peeled and very thinly sliced

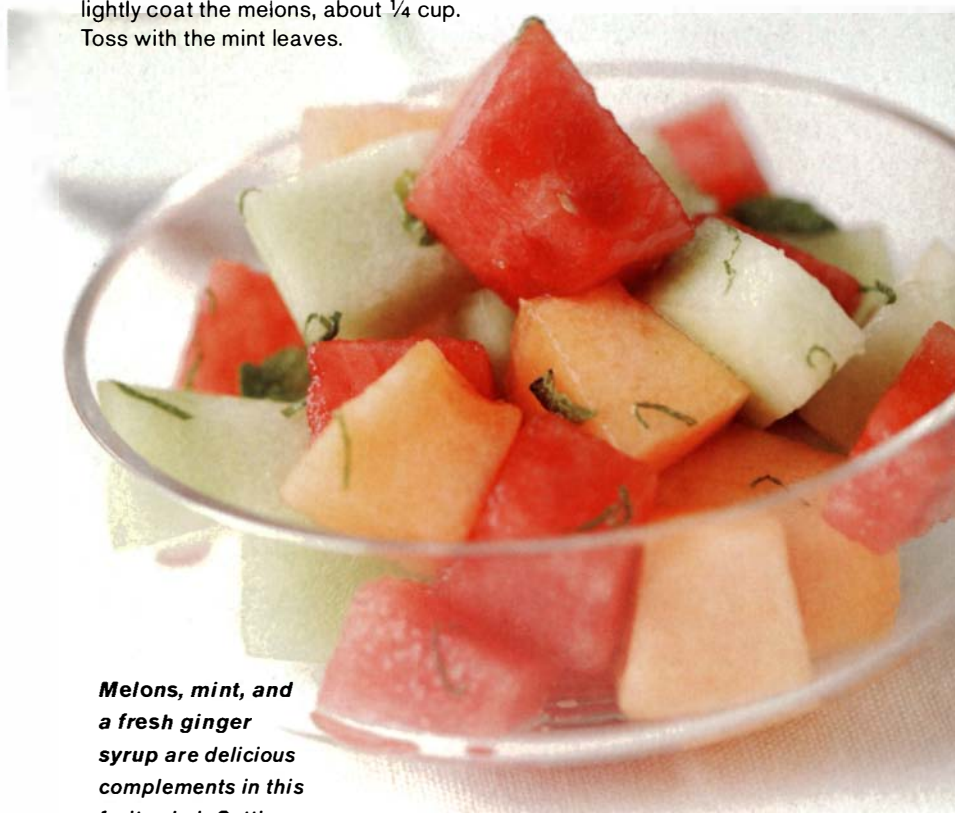
8 cups mixed ¾-inch melon cubes (from 5 to 8 pounds melon)

Leaves from 5 sprigs mint (small leaves left whole; larger leaves sliced into thin strips)

Combine the sugar and water in a small saucepan. Bring to a simmer over medium heat, stirring occasionally until the sugar dissolves. Add the ginger and reduce the heat to low. Cook for 7 minutes to let the ginger infuse. Strain through a fine sieve, let cool, and refrigerate until completely chilled.

Just before serving, mix the melon cubes in a large serving bowl and pour on just enough of the ginger syrup to lightly coat the melons, about ⅓ cup. Toss with the mint leaves.

As you're drizzling on the syrup, imagine that you're dressing a green salad and use just enough to lightly coat the fruit.



Melons, mint, and a fresh ginger syrup are delicious complements in this fruit salad. Cutting the melons in large cubes enhances their big, juicy flavor.

Creating Fresh, Summer

Follow a simple formula to make a lighter salad with fresh, seasonal ingredients

Perfect for an outdoor picnic or a casual dinner party, pasta salad is a versatile summer side dish.

Yet it can also be less than spectacular: I'm sure you've had at least one rubbery, starchy, or bland version. But pasta salads don't have to feel leaden; a few principles can make yours feel lighter, fresher, and, well, more like a

salad. Start by using a high proportion of vegetables and other add-ins, so that the dish isn't all about the pasta but instead has the refreshing effect that an abundance of seasonal vegetables, herbs, and cheeses bring to it. Then follow a few other tips to avoid pasta salad pitfalls.

Your finished dish will only be as good as the quality of the raw materials. Don't make a pasta salad with old or wilted vegetables, or with old, musty ground spices. If your dried

Use this formula for a pasta salad that serves eight to ten

½ pound pasta
6 cups vegetables
1 cup vinaigrette
1 or 2 add-ins
Cheese (optional)

pasta has been sitting on the shelf for ages, buy a new box; dried pasta has a shelf life of 8 to 12 months, and whole-wheat varieties are especially susceptible to rancidity. Also, check that your oils and vinegars are bright and clean tasting.

Pasta salads are best served warm or at room temperature within a few hours of assembly. I find

that the flavor and texture of a pasta salad suffer if it's allowed to sit (refrigerated) for more than 3 to 4 hours. The salt, seasonings, and acid in the dressing will draw out the water from the vegetables, which in turn dilutes the flavor of the dressing, which is then absorbed by the pasta. The pasta tends either to break down and become flabby, or toughen and taste overly starchy. A better option is to make the components ahead and assemble them just before serving.

Choose ingredients to balance flavors and textures

Your choice of fresh seasonal vegetables, zesty dressings, herbs, cheeses, and other flavors will give a pasta salad its individuality and style.

While almost any combination will work, keep in mind familiar and classic combinations—tomatoes and mozzarella, green beans and pesto, spinach, feta, and olives—to guide you. To make your decisions easier, start by choosing either a vinaigrette or a selection of seasonal vegetables, and then add flavors and textures to suit.

Vinaigrette

The acidity of a tangy, herby vinaigrette brightens the starchy pasta and brings the components of the dish together. Choose one of the vinaigrettes on p. 58, or use your favorite recipe. Just be sure it has a bright acidity.

Vegetables

Because pasta is so neutrally flavored, it's easy company for just about any vegetable. But if you want a truly fresh, seasonal feel to your pasta salad, choose summer vegetables like corn, beans, peas, peppers, and leafy greens. Many vegetables can go in raw, though others need cooking first (see p. 59). Just remember to cut them all into bite-size pieces.



Pasta Salads

BY PETER BERLEY



Pasta

The amount of pasta in the salad should never exceed 50 percent of the total dish. The greater the proportion of vegetables and proteins, the more the dish will feel like a salad.

Add-ins

Taste the salad and add boldly flavored ingredients like fresh herbs, red onion, and briny olives and capers to give the salad bursts of flavor and contrasting textures.

Cheese

You don't have to add cheese to your pasta salad, but fresh cheeses like mozzarella, feta, and goat cheese add creaminess and round out all the flavors.

For convenience, the vinaigrette, vegetables, and pasta can be made up to a day ahead and stored separately in covered bowls in the refrigerator.

1 Make a vinaigrette and put a pot of water on to boil

Make one of the vinaigrettes below for your salad. (Or make your own favorite with plenty of bright-tasting vinegar or lemon juice.) Put 4 to 6 quarts of salted water in a large pot and set it over high heat. Once it's hot enough to have dissolved the salt, taste the water—it should taste like sea water. If it doesn't, add more salt. Note that this water will be used for cooking both the pasta and some of the vegetables, so don't pour it out when you're finished cooking your vegetables, just keep the water on the heat.

Pesto Vinaigrette

Yields about 1 cup.

1½ cups lightly packed fresh basil leaves
½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
½ cup fresh, finely grated Parmigiano Reggiano
3 tablespoons red- or white-wine vinegar
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
2 teaspoons finely chopped garlic
½ teaspoon finely grated lemon zest
¾ teaspoon kosher salt
Freshly ground black pepper

Put the basil, olive oil, Parmigiano, vinegar, lemon juice, garlic, and lemon zest in a blender. Blend until smooth. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

TIP: Whole or chopped toasted pine nuts make a lovely garnish for a salad made with this vinaigrette.

Pairings

Try this vinaigrette with rotini pasta, asparagus, green beans, cherry tomatoes, and toasted pine nuts.

Lemon-Herb Vinaigrette

Yields about 1 cup.

⅓ cup fresh lemon juice
1 tablespoon whole-grain mustard
1 tablespoon finely chopped shallot
1½ teaspoons honey
1 teaspoon finely grated lemon zest
½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
2 tablespoons chopped fresh dill
2 tablespoons chopped fresh chives
¾ teaspoon kosher salt
Freshly ground black pepper

Combine the lemon juice, mustard, shallot, honey, and zest in a medium bowl and set aside for 5 to 10 minutes to let the shallot's flavor mellow. Whisk in the oil. Stir in the herbs and season with salt and pepper to taste.

TIP: Try replacing the dill and chives with mint and parsley.

Pairings

Try this vinaigrette with gemelli pasta, spinach, cucumbers, bell pepper, olives, and feta cheese for a Greek-style pasta salad.

Sun-Dried Tomato Vinaigrette

Yields about 1 cup.

¼ cup sherry vinegar
2 tablespoons capers, drained and rinsed (roughly chopped if large)
2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice
2 cloves garlic, crushed and peeled
½ teaspoon chopped fresh rosemary
⅓ cup extra-virgin olive oil
½ cup oil-packed sun-dried tomatoes, drained
¾ teaspoon kosher salt
Pinch cayenne; more to taste

In a medium bowl, combine the vinegar, capers, lemon juice, garlic, and rosemary. Add the olive oil and whisk to combine. Slice the tomatoes into thin strips and stir them into the dressing. Season with salt and cayenne and set aside for at least 30 minutes. Discard the garlic before using.

Pairings

Try this vinaigrette with pasta shells, arugula, corn kernels, halved red and orange cherry tomatoes, quartered artichoke hearts, and fresh mozzarella.

2 Prepare your vegetables

You'll need a total of about 6 cups prepared vegetables. They can be either raw or cooked; I like a combination of both. Prepare the vegetables following the lists below.

Vegetables to toss in raw

Cucumbers (seedless), cut into quarter moons

Cherry or grape tomatoes, halved

Bell peppers, cut into thin matchsticks, 2 to 3 inches long

Greens: baby arugula, watercress sprigs, or baby spinach

Carrots, cut into thin matchsticks, 2 to 3 inches long

Snow peas, thinly sliced crosswise on the diagonal

Summer squash or zucchini, diced into ¼-inch pieces

Canned artichoke hearts, rinsed and quartered

Canned chickpeas, rinsed

Vegetables to cook

Green or yellow string beans, snapped into 2-inch lengths

Asparagus, cut on the diagonal into 2-inch pieces

Peas, fresh or frozen

Sugar snap peas

Corn kernels, fresh or frozen

3 For cooked vegetables, boil until crisp-tender

Because vegetables cook at varying rates, you'll need to cook each type separately. Drop each vegetable into the boiling water and, after a minute or two, bite into a piece to check doneness—you want them to be cooked through but still crisp-tender. Corn kernels, fresh peas, and asparagus usually take no more than 2 to 3 minutes; green beans might need a little more time. Remove them from the water with a slotted spoon.

To preserve texture and color, cool the vegetables by spreading them on a baking sheet lined with paper towels, or by running them under cold water and spreading them on clean cotton towels. Blot them dry. This will help to absorb excess moisture, which is crucial because vegetables tend to retain a lot more of their cooking water than pasta.

Cooking tip

To cook corn kernels or peas, put them in a strainer and dip the strainer into the boiling water so that the vegetables are easy to fish out when they're done.

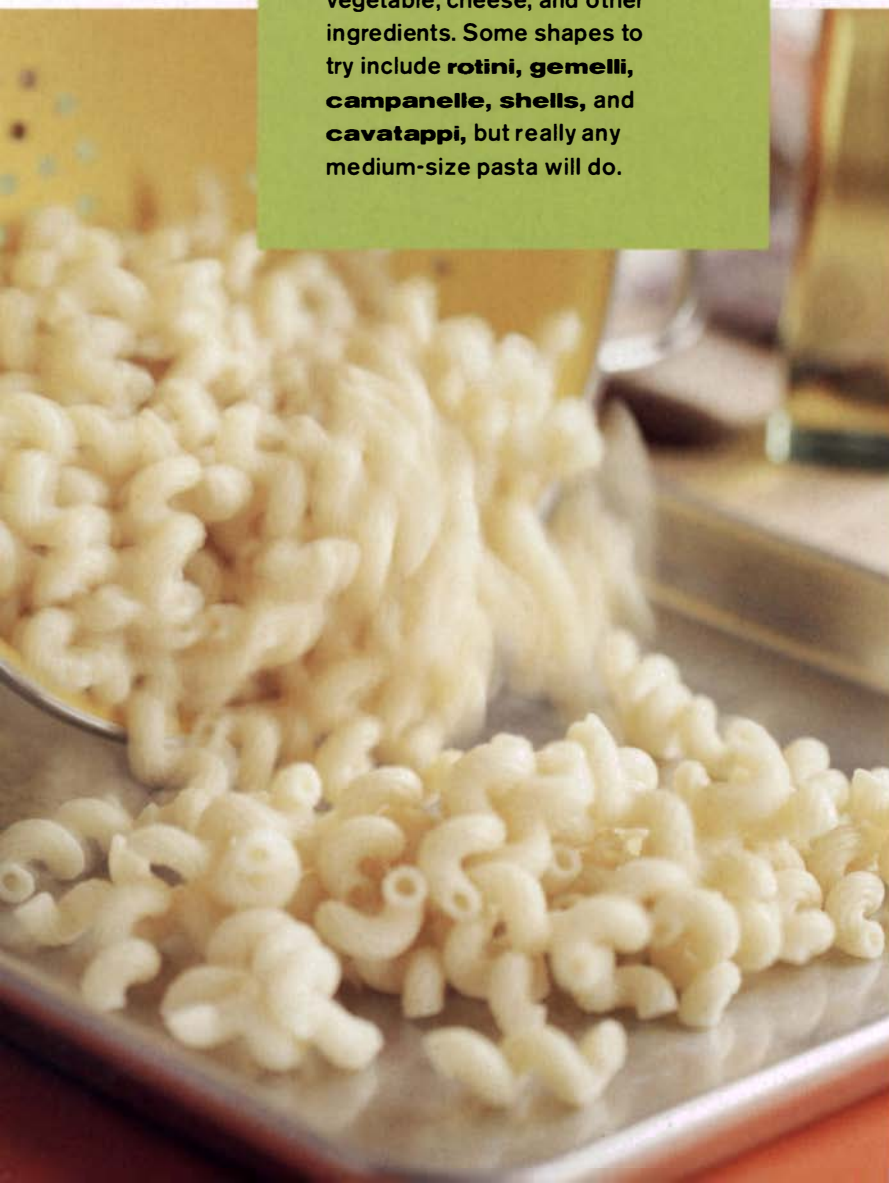


4 Cook the pasta and let it cool

Bring the water back to a boil and cook the $\frac{1}{2}$ pound of pasta until just al dente, following the package instructions. Drain it thoroughly by shaking it in a colander and immediately pouring it out onto a rimmed baking sheet. The wide surface area of the baking sheet will encourage the quick evaporation of surface moisture. Toss the pasta with a tablespoon of olive oil to prevent sticking.

Pasta

A pasta shape with some curves or twists works well because it helps catch and hold pieces of vegetable, cheese, and other ingredients. Some shapes to try include **rotini**, **gemelli**, **campanelle**, **shells**, and **cavatappi**, but really any medium-size pasta will do.



5 Prepare add-ins and cheese

Choose one or two add-ins and prepare a few tablespoons of each, keeping in mind that you may need less of assertive ingredients like capers and scallions.

Add-ins

Pine nuts, toasted

Scallions, thinly sliced on the diagonal

Red onion, diced or thinly sliced

Fresh herbs: chopped flat-leaf parsley, chopped dill, basil cut into thin strips

Olives, pitted and slivered or quartered

Capers, rinsed

Cheese (optional; pick one)

Feta cheese, 4 ounces, crumbled (1 scant cup)

Goat cheese, 4 ounces, crumbled ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup)

Fresh mozzarella, 8 ounces, diced (about 1 cup)

6 Toss the salad just before serving and let it rest briefly

Do-ahead tip

If you've prepared your pasta and vegetables ahead, let them come to room temperature before assembling the salad so you get the best flavor. Room-temperature pasta will absorb the dressing better than cold pasta.

Transfer the cooled pasta to a large serving bowl. Add the vegetables to the pasta and toss. Carefully dress the salad with enough of the vinaigrette to moisten the pasta, but be sure not to overdress it. Add the cheese, if using, and add-ins and toss again. (Ingredients like olives and capers should be added judiciously at first, looking and tasting to check the balance as you go). Let the salad rest for 10 to 15 minutes to allow the flavors to meld and then taste the salad again. If necessary, add a little more vinaigrette and salt and pepper. Serve as soon as possible.

Serving tip

Taste the salad right before serving. If it needs it, perk up its flavor with a squeeze of lemon and some salt and pepper.



Peter Berley is the author of the award-winning *Modern Vegetarian Kitchen*. His latest book, *Fresh Food Fast*, was published in May. ♦

BY RICK RODGERS

Three Steps to

An ocean of ink has been spilled about cooking meals quickly. Frankly, I have to scratch my head over this so-called dilemma. If you're in a hurry, fish is the natural choice. It's the ultimate fast food. As I explain to students in my cooking classes, if you take longer than ten minutes to cook fish fillets, you're probably doing something wrong. Sautéed, broiled, or baked (a slight exception to the ten-minute rule), fish is endlessly versatile.

Make a quick stop at the grocery store's seafood counter on the way home from work, and you're well on your way to a delicious, healthy meal. Fillets of lean white-fleshed fish are a good choice because they cook in no time, and their mild flavor works in so many different recipes. You can fold or roll fillets around flavorful fillings and pop them in the oven; slather on a rich glaze and broil them; or simply sauté them and drizzle on a vinaigrette.

I stock my kitchen with boldly flavored ingredients that make a big impression in fish recipes—zesty Parmigiano Reggiano, briny olives, pungent mustards, tangy mayonnaise, assertive anchovies, tart lemons. As you'll see in my recipes (on pp. 64-65), with these ingredients and a few simple techniques, it takes very little effort to turn fresh fish into a great meal.

start with thin fillets

Thin fillets cook fast

Lean, white-fleshed fish, such as flounder, sole, striped bass, snapper, and farm-raised tilapia, are readily available at markets. The fillets of these delicately flavored fish are usually quite thin, so they cook rapidly. In recipes, it's fine to substitute one variety for another that has the same basic shape. But don't substitute oily-fleshed fish, such as salmon, char, tuna, and bluefish. Their assertive flavors require balancing with different ingredients.



Fast, Flavorful Fish

add a
few bold
flavors

Stock your pantry well

Versatile flavor-packed ingredients can make simple fish dishes taste deceptively complex. I consider these items essential:

Clam juice: It adds substance to quick fish stews.

Dry vermouth: Use it instead of dry white wine in sauces for fish; it keeps much longer.

Lemons: Bright, acidic lemon zest and juice pair well with fish.

Mayonnaise: Use it in creamy glazes (see the flounder recipe on p. 65).

Good-quality olives: Chop them to make a stuffing or topping.

Mustard: Its pungency is the perfect foil to mild fish.

Capers: They add zing to sauces.

Extra-virgin olive oil: Sometimes a drizzle of good, fragrant olive oil is all fish needs.

Parmigiano Reggiano: Sprinkle it, freshly grated, on broiled fish.

Anchovies: Wrap a mild fillet around a salty little anchovy for a taste of the sea.

Quick and easy cooking

Whether you sauté, broil, or bake them, thin white-fleshed fillets cook very quickly. The tender flesh is naturally moist, but because it's so low in fat, it can dry out if overcooked. If you figure about 8 to 10 minutes per inch of thickness, a thin fillet will be done in 3 or 4 minutes. Folding or rolling fillets is one of my favorite techniques for enclosing flavor and avoiding overcooking.

give it
a roll or
a fold



Sautéed Snapper with Broken Black-Olive Vinaigrette

Serves four.

1/3 cup coarsely chopped pitted kalamata olives
1/3 cup plus 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
**1 1/2 tablespoons loosely packed finely
grated lemon zest (from 1 large lemon)**
1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
1 small clove garlic, minced
1/8 teaspoon crushed red chile flakes
Kosher salt
4 skin-on snapper fillets, about 6 ounces each
1/3 cup flour for dredging
**5 ounces (5 cups loosely packed) baby
arugula, washed and dried**
4 lemon wedges for serving

Mix the olives, 1/3 cup of the oil, the lemon zest, lemon juice, garlic, and chile flakes in a small bowl with a fork; the vinaigrette doesn't need to emulsify. Season with salt to taste.

Pull out any bones in the fish with needle-nose pliers or tweezers. Season both sides of the fish with salt and dredge very lightly in the flour. Heat 2 tablespoons oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium heat. When hot, add two of the fillets, skin side up; cook until light golden brown, 4 to 5 minutes. With a thin slotted metal spatula, turn the fish and cook until the second side is lightly browned and the fish is cooked through, about 3 minutes. Transfer the fillets, skin side down, to a plate, cover to keep warm. Repeat with the remaining fillets.

Stir the vinaigrette, toss enough of it with the arugula to coat lightly (1 to 2 tablespoons), and portion it among four plates. Lay the fish on top, spoon the remaining vinaigrette over the fillets, and serve with a wedge of lemon.



tool tips

A nonstick skillet is perfect for sautéing fish fillets with no worries about sticking. A 12-incher will hold four fillets; two or three fillets work in an 8- or 10-incher. A thin, angled slotted spatula with a slightly curved lip (as shown in *Where to Buy It*, p. 82) is very helpful for turning delicate fish.





Broiled Flounder with Parmesan "Caesar" Glaze

Serves four to six.

8 skinless flounder fillets, 4 to 5 ounces each
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
⅓ cup good-quality mayonnaise
1½ ounces (½ cup) freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano, grated on the small holes of a box grater
1½ tablespoons loosely packed finely grated lemon zest (from 1 large lemon)
1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
½ teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
1 small clove garlic, minced
2 tablespoons coarsely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

Position a rack 4 inches from the heat element and heat the broiler on high. Lightly season both sides of the fillets with salt and pepper. Set a fillet before you, skinned side up, and starting at the narrow end, roll up the fillet. Repeat with the remaining fillets.

Spray a broiler pan with nonstick cooking spray. Arrange the flounder rolls, seam side down, in the pan. Broil until the tops are lightly browned, 7 to 8 minutes. Meanwhile, whisk the mayonnaise, Parmesan, lemon zest and juice, Worcestershire, and garlic in a small bowl. Season with pepper to taste.

When the tops of the fillets are lightly browned, remove the fish from the broiler. Spread equal amounts of the mayonnaise mixture over the top of each fillet. Return to the broiler until the topping is golden brown and bubbling, 1½ to 2 minutes. Transfer the fillets to four dinner plates and sprinkle with the parsley. Serve immediately.

Baked Tilapia with Tarragon-Scallion Stuffing & Butter Sauce

Serves four.

6 tablespoons cold unsalted butter
¼ cup thinly sliced scallions (white and tender light green parts from about 4 scallions)
1 cup coarse fresh breadcrumbs (from a baguette or other crusty white loaf)
2 teaspoons chopped fresh tarragon or ¾ teaspoon crumbled dried tarragon
1 large egg, beaten
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
4 tilapia fillets, about 6 ounces each
⅓ cup dry vermouth
⅓ cup homemade or low-salt chicken broth
2 teaspoons Dijon mustard

Position a rack in the upper third of the oven and heat the oven to 400°F.

Melt 4 tablespoons of the butter in a medium saucepan or skillet over medium-low heat. Lightly brush the inside of a 9x13-inch Pyrex baking dish with some of the melted butter. Transfer 1 tablespoon of the melted butter to a small dish and keep warm. Add the scallions to the remaining butter in the saucepan and cook, stirring, until softened, about 2 minutes. In a medium bowl, mix the melted scallion butter with the breadcrumbs, tarragon, beaten egg, ¼ teaspoon salt, and several grinds of pepper.

Lightly season the fillets on both sides with salt and pepper. Lay a fillet on a work surface with the pointed end facing you. Mound a quarter of the stuffing on the pointed half of the fillet. Fold the wide, split end of the fillet over and press firmly (but don't

squish) to cover the stuffing. Some stuffing will remain exposed. Put the stuffed fillet in the buttered baking dish. Repeat with the remaining fillets. Brush the tops of the fillets with the reserved tablespoon of melted butter. Pour the vermouth and chicken broth around, not over, the fillets.

Bake until the fish feels firm but flaky and the insides of the fillets look opaque when pierced with the tip of a sharp knife, 20 to 25 minutes. Using a thin, flexible slotted metal spatula, transfer the fillets to four dinner plates.

Add 1 tablespoon cold butter to the hot baking dish and whisk until the butter melts. Repeat with the remaining 1 tablespoon butter and the mustard. Season the sauce with salt and pepper and spoon over the fillets. Serve immediately.

Rick Rodgers is a cooking teacher and the author of more than 25 cookbooks, including the forthcoming Carefree Celebrations. ♦





Making Lattice-Top Fruit Pies

BY ROSE LEVY BERANBAUM

The trickiest part of making a lattice-top pie isn't figuring out how to weave the top crust (the step-by-step photos on the next page show the technique). The real trick is in the dough. It must be strong enough to withstand extra handling but still be tender and full of flavor when it's baked. I've recently developed a butter crust that's ideal for lattice pies. It contains a few more ingredients than your average pie dough, but each one plays a vital role.

Cake flour helps ensure tenderness. It has a lower protein content than all-purpose flour, which means less gluten development (too much gluten makes a tough crust; see *From Our Test Kitchen*, p. 77). You do need some gluten for strength, however, which is why I use a combination of cake flour and bleached all-purpose flour. If you can't find cake flour, using 100% bleached all-purpose flour will work, too. Bleached flour is more tender; bleaching destroys some of the gluten-forming properties.

Cream cheese enhances flavor and tenderness. It contains more fat and milk solids than butter. The extra fat coats some of the flour proteins, limiting gluten development. The milk solids contribute flavor and a smooth texture.

Heavy cream provides the moisture that brings the dough together in the food processor, and the fat gives the crust a richer flavor and a more tender texture.

Vinegar is acidic, and acids weaken gluten. This makes the crust more tender and minimizes shrinkage during baking.

Baking powder lifts and aerates the dough slightly, making it seem even more tender. I recommend Rumford brand baking powder, as it contains calcium phosphate instead of aluminum sulfate, which leaves a bitter aftertaste.

You can make a lattice pie without special equipment, but if you want the top strips to have decorative edges, you'll need a fluted pastry wheel, called a pastry jagger. For sources for pastry jagers and other pie baking equipment, see p. 82.

It's easy with
a crust that
handles well
yet bakes
up crisp and
tender

PIE FILLINGS:

- peach
- sour cherry
- blueberry
- rhubarb

Filling recipes start
on p. 70.

Follow these 4 steps to assemble and bake

Lattice-Top Summer Fruit Pie

Serves eight; yields enough dough for one 9-inch lattice-top pie.

FOR THE DOUGH:

6 ounces (12 tablespoons)
cold unsalted butter
6½ ounces (1½ cups)
bleached all-purpose flour
3½ ounces (¾ cup) cake flour
¼ teaspoon table salt
¼ teaspoon baking powder
**4½ ounces (½ cup plus 1 table-
spoon)** cold cream cheese
3 tablespoons heavy cream
1 tablespoon cider vinegar

FOR THE FILLING:

Choose one of the recipes on
pp. 70–71

FOR THE GLAZE:

2 tablespoons milk
1 tablespoon turbinado sugar
(see p. 82 for sources) or
granulated sugar

1 Make the dough

Cut the butter into ¾-inch cubes. Wrap them in plastic and freeze until hard, at least 30 minutes. Put the all-purpose flour, cake flour, salt, and baking powder in a metal bowl and freeze for at least 30 minutes.

Put the cold flour mixture in a food processor and process for a few seconds to combine.

Cut the cold cream cheese into three or four pieces and add it to the flour mixture. Process for 20 seconds (the mixture should resemble fine meal). Add the frozen butter cubes and pulse until none of the butter pieces is larger than a pea, about five 3-second pulses. (Toss with a fork to see it better.)

Add the cream and vinegar and pulse in short bursts until the dough starts to come together (which will take a minute or two); the dough will still look crumbly but if you press it between your fingers, it should become smooth. Turn it out onto a clean work surface. Gather and press the dough together to form a unified mass.

Cut the dough in half and put each half on a large piece of plastic wrap. Loosely cover the dough with the plastic. Using the wrap as an aid (to avoid warming the dough with your bare hands), shape one half of the dough into a flat disk and the other into a flat rectangle. Wrap each tightly in the plastic and refrigerate for at least 45 minutes and up to 24 hours.

2 Roll out the bottom crust

Remove the disk of dough from the fridge (keep the rectangle refrigerated); if it's very firm, let it sit at room temperature until it's pliable enough to roll, 10 to 15 minutes.

Set the dough between two sheets of plastic wrap sprinkled lightly with flour. Roll it out to a 13-inch round that's ⅛ inch thick, occasionally loosening and re-applying the plastic wrap.

Remove one piece of plastic and flip the dough into a standard metal 9-inch pie pan (it should be 1¼ inches deep and hold 4 cups of liquid). Fit the dough into the pan and carefully peel off the plastic. Trim the dough so there's a ¾-inch overhang. Fold the overhang underneath itself to create an edge that extends about ¼ inch beyond the rim of the pie pan. Cover the dough-lined pie plate with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes.



Process the dough until it's crumbly but just starting to clump together. If you can press the crumbs together and get a smooth dough, it's ready.

How to weave a lattice



Arrange five strips of dough evenly over the filling, starting with a long strip for the center. Gently fold back every other strip (the second and fourth) to a little past the center.



Choose another long strip of dough, hold it perpendicular to the other strips, and set it across the center of the pie.

a lattice pie

3 Make the filling and top the pie

Make the fruit filling as instructed in the recipes on the next page.

Remove the rectangle of dough from the refrigerator and let it sit at room temperature until it's pliable enough to roll, 10 to 15 minutes. Roll the dough on a lightly floured surface to an 11x14-inch or larger rectangle (if it becomes an oval, that's fine); it should be no more than $\frac{1}{8}$ inch thick.

Cut ten $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch-wide strips lengthwise down the rectangle, using a ruler to measure and mark $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch intervals and to cut a straight edge. If you want a crimped edge on the strips, use a fluted pastry wheel (for sources, see p. 82).

Stir the fruit filling a few times and scrape it into the pie shell. Make the lattice top as shown in the photos starting below left.

Choose your favorite filling—cherry, rhubarb, blueberry, or peach—from the recipes on pp. 70-71. Baking and cooling times are different for each filling; be sure to check the recipe.



The last step before weaving the lattice. To keep the pie shell from getting soggy, pour in the fruit filling only after you've cut the strips of dough for the lattice.

4 Bake the pie and let it cool

Lightly cover the assembled pie with plastic wrap and refrigerate for 1 hour. After 30 minutes of chilling, set an oven rack on the lowest rung and put a foil-lined baking stone or baking sheet on it. Heat the oven to 425°F.

When the pie has chilled for 1 hour, brush the lattice with the milk and sprinkle on the sugar.

Set the pie directly on the baking stone or sheet. Bake until the juices are bubbling all over (the bubbles should be thick and slow near the pan edges), 40 to 55 minutes, depending on the filling (see the filling recipe for a more specific baking time). After the first 15 minutes, cover the rim with foil or a pie shield. If the lattice starts to darken too much in the last 10 minutes of baking, cover it loosely with a piece of foil that has a vent hole poked in the center.

Let the pie cool on a rack until the juices have thickened, 1 to 4 hours, depending on the fruit filling (see the filling recipe for a more specific cooling time).

for a beautiful fruit pie



Unfold the two folded strips so they lie flat on top of the perpendicular strip. Now fold back the strips that weren't folded back last time (the first, third, and fifth ones).



Lay a strip of dough about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch away from the last one. Unfold the three folded strips. Fold back the original two strips, set a strip of dough $\frac{3}{4}$ inch from the last one, and unfold the two strips.



Repeat on the other side with the two remaining strips: fold back alternating strips, lay a strip of dough on top, and unfold. Remember to alternate the strips that are folded back to create a woven effect.



Trim the strips to a $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch overhang. Moisten the underside of each one with water and tuck it under the bottom crust, pressing to make it adhere. Crimp or flute the edges, if you like. Chill and bake the pie as directed in step 4 above.

Four pie fillings made from fresh summer fruits



Cherry Pie Filling

This classic cherry pie filling uses sour cherries (not sweet cherries like Bings). During their brief season in early summer, sour cherries appear in some groceries and many farmers' markets. See p. 74 for more on sour cherries, including freezing and thawing tips.

BAKING TIME: 40 TO 55 MINUTES
COOLING TIME: 3 HOURS

¾ cup plus 2 tablespoons granulated sugar
2½ tablespoons cornstarch
Pinch table salt
1½ pounds fresh sour cherries, pitted (juices reserved) to equal 3½ cups (1¼ pounds)
⅛ teaspoon pure almond extract

In a medium bowl, stir the sugar, cornstarch, and salt. Stir in the cherries (along with any juices) and the almond extract. Let the mixture sit for 10 minutes.



Rhubarb Pie Filling

Strawberry and rhubarb are classic pie partners, but rhubarb can fly solo, too. This pie filling is deliciously fresh, tart, and light.

BAKING TIME: 40 TO 50 MINUTES
COOLING TIME: 1 HOUR

¾ cup granulated sugar
4 teaspoons cornstarch
1 teaspoon finely grated lemon zest (I use a Microplane grater)
Pinch table salt
4 cups ½-inch pieces rhubarb (about 1¼ pounds)

In a medium bowl, stir the sugar, cornstarch, lemon zest, and salt. Add the rhubarb and toss to coat. Let sit until the sugar is fully moistened, about 10 minutes.



Blueberry Pie Filling

Blueberries are the easiest fruit to turn into pie—just toss them with lemon, sugar, and cornstarch and put in the pie shell.

BAKING TIME: 40 TO 55 MINUTES
COOLING TIME: 4 HOURS

½ cup granulated sugar
2 tablespoons cornstarch
2 teaspoons finely grated lemon zest (I use a Microplane grater)
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
Pinch table salt
4 cups fresh blueberries (2½ dry pints or 1¼ pounds), stemmed, rinsed, and dried

In a medium bowl, stir the sugar, cornstarch, lemon zest, lemon juice, and salt. Add the blueberries and toss to coat.

For a sweet and sparkly lattice top, brush the crust with milk and sprinkle with turbinado sugar before baking.



Peach Pie Filling

I macerate the peaches and boil the juices to concentrate them. This intensifies their peachiness and means you need less cornstarch thickener, thus preserving the fruit's flavor. I love the toastiness of turbinado sugar, but granulated works fine.

BAKING TIME: 40 TO 50 MINUTES*

COOLING TIME: 3 HOURS

2¾ pounds ripe but firm peaches
(about 8 medium)

1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
⅔ cup turbinado sugar (or
granulated sugar)

Pinch table salt

4 teaspoons cornstarch

¼ teaspoon pure almond extract

Peel the peaches (see From Our Test Kitchen, p. 75, for peeling technique). Halve each peach, remove the pit, and slice each half into eight thin wedges; you should have 6 cups.

Put the peaches in a large bowl and sprinkle the lemon juice over them. Sprinkle on the sugar and salt and toss gently to mix. Let sit at room temperature for at least 30 minutes and up to 12 hours. Transfer them to a colander suspended over a bowl to collect the juices; you should have almost 1 cup of liquid (if the peaches sat for several hours, you'll have 1 to 1½ cups liquid).

Pour the juices into a small, non-stick saucepan set over medium heat. Boil down the liquid, swirling but not stirring, until it's syrupy, about 10 minutes; it should reduce to ⅓ to ½ cup, depending on how much liquid you started with. Set aside to cool for 1 or 2 minutes.

Meanwhile, transfer the peaches to a bowl and toss them with the cornstarch and almond extract until all traces of cornstarch have disappeared. Pour the reduced peach juices over the peaches, tossing gently. (Don't worry if the liquid hardens on the peaches; it will dissolve during baking.)

** The peaches should feel tender but not mushy when pricked with a skewer.*

Rose Levy Beranbaum is the author of several baking bibles, including The Pie & Pastry Bible. ♦

exploring...
Malaysian
Cuisine

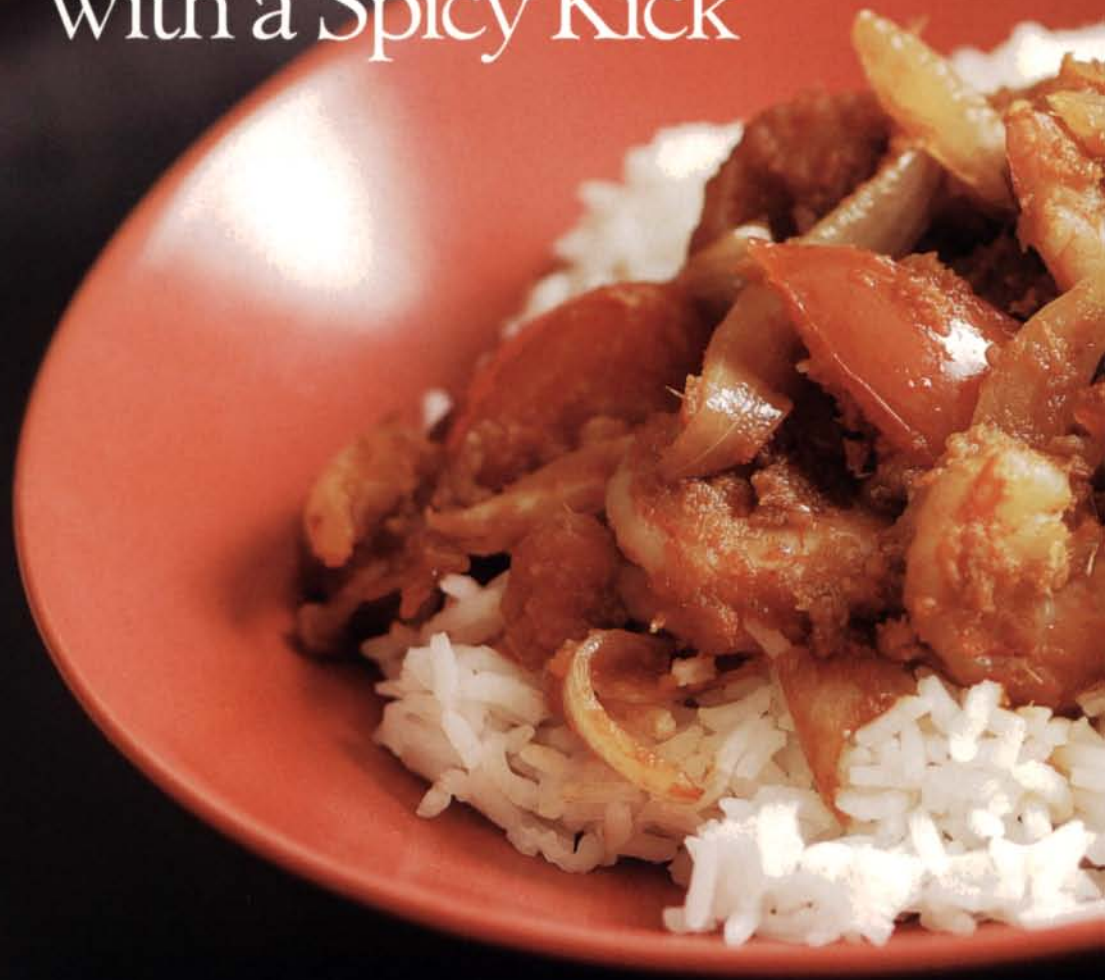
An aromatic purée is
the key to making
*Shrimp in Chile-
Lemongrass Sauce*

BY JOYCE JUE

A blender—that's the only piece of equipment you need to make *rempah*, the intriguing Malaysian spice paste that's the basis of the terrific shrimp dish shown here. To make a *rempah*, you just purée a combination of aromatic, spicy ingredients, fry the purée in oil to draw out and marry the flavors, and add the paste to whatever dish you're making. In the recipe at right, the *rempah*'s ginger, shallots, chiles, fish sauce, garlic, and lemongrass supply all the interesting flavor notes to what would otherwise be basic wok-cooked shrimp. *Rempahs* are an indispensable part of Malaysian cuisine, used in everything from marinades and sauces to braises and sautés. In this way, a *rempah* is similar to a Thai curry paste (Malaysia and Thailand are on the same peninsula in Southeast Asia), with variations just as infinite.

There's nothing exotic or difficult about making a *rempah* at home. Sure, Malaysian home cooks work in an outdoor kitchen, pounding the ingredients first in a mortar and then on a granite slab (called a *batu giling*) with a stone rolling pin, and putting all their weight into the effort. But the fact is that a blender does the job just as well and takes far less time and muscle. I've chosen this shrimp dish as an introduction to the *rempah* technique precisely because it's so easy.

Saucy Shrimp with a Spicy Kick



Purée and then fry a spicy blend



Blend the chiles, lemongrass, and the other *rempah* ingredients until puréed, adding liquid as necessary to get a smooth paste.

Heat the oil in a wok or stir-fry pan and scrape the paste into the pan. Fry gently until the *rempah* emulsifies, darkens, and thickens.

Add the shrimp and onions, stirring until the shrimp is cooked. The *rempah* will cling to the shrimp and vegetables like a ragout.

For an authentic touch, seek out these ingredients

Usually this dish (called a *sambal udang*) would include a few hard-to-find ingredients, but I've made some substitutions so you'll be able to get everything in a well-stocked supermarket. If you want to make the dish with the traditional ingredients, all the better; the sidebar at far right will guide you. Either way, it will be alluringly rich and spicy, with an indefinable something that keeps you coming back for more.

Shrimp in Chile-Lemongrass Sauce

Serves four.

The asterisked ingredients are my substitutions for the traditional ones, which are described in the sidebar at right.

FOR THE REMPAH:

- 1 large dried New Mexico or California red chile
- 2 dried chiles de árbol or cayenne chiles
- 2 stalks fresh lemongrass
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh ginger*
- 2 teaspoons slivered almonds**
- 4 large shallots, coarsely chopped
- 4 to 5 cloves garlic, coarsely chopped
- 1 teaspoon fish sauce***
- 2 fresh red Fresno chiles or red jalapeños, seeded and sliced

FOR THE SHRIMP:

- ½ cup corn oil or vegetable oil
- 1 pound large shrimp (26-30 per pound), shelled, deveined, rinsed, and patted dry
- 1 medium onion, halved through the stem and cut lengthwise into ½-inch slices
- 2 small tomatoes, cored and cut through the stem end into 8 wedges
- 2 tablespoons granulated sugar
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 2 tablespoons fresh lime juice

Make the rempah: Cut all the dried chiles into 4 or 5 pieces each with scissors; shake out the seeds. Put the chiles in a small saucepan and cover with water. Bring to a boil and reduce the heat, simmering until the chiles are soft and flexible, about 3 minutes. Drain the chiles, reserving the water. Put the chiles in a blender.

Trim off the root and top section of the lemongrass, leaving a

5- to 6-inch section of bottom stem. Remove the fibrous outer layers until you reach the tender white core. Smash this core with the side of a knife to flatten it slightly. Cut it in half lengthwise and then slice crosswise into thin pieces.

Add the lemongrass, ginger, almonds, shallots, garlic, fish sauce, fresh chiles, and 3 tablespoons of the reserved chile water to the blender. Blend to a smooth purée, adding a few more tablespoons of the chile water, or up to ½ cup total if needed, to facilitate blending.

Cook the rempah and the shrimp: Heat a nonstick wok or stir-fry pan or a large sauté pan over medium heat for 2 minutes. Add the oil and swirl to coat the pan. Scrape the rempah into the pan and fry gently, stirring continuously with a wooden spoon until the oil and rempah are blended and emulsified, about 1 minute. Continue frying, stirring occasionally, until the mixture darkens and thickens to a porridge consistency, 3 to 5 minutes. (If you added extra water to the blender, it may take longer to thicken.) The rempah should separate, with reddish beads of oil on the surface.

Increase the heat to medium high and add the shrimp and onions. Fry them, tossing and flipping frequently, until the shrimp feel firm to the touch and the onions are crisp-tender, 3 to 5 minutes. Add the tomato, sugar, salt, and lime juice, stirring and cooking just long enough to mix and to heat the tomato wedges without breaking them apart.

* **FRESH GALANGAL** is related to ginger (which is what I've substituted in this recipe). It's hot and pungent like ginger, but in a different way. Galangal has a faint mustardy aroma and some say a medicinal quality. In this recipe, you can replace the ginger with an equal amount of chopped fresh or frozen peeled galangal (if frozen, let it thaw before chopping).

** **CANDLENUTS** are very hard, high-fat nuts similar in size to hazelnuts. In Malaysia, they're used to thicken and add texture to a rempah, but they're never eaten raw as they're mildly toxic. In this recipe, you can replace the almonds with 2 candlenuts, soaked first in lukewarm water for 10 minutes.

*** **DRIED SHRIMP PASTE**, called *blachan*, adds a savory depth to Malaysian food. In this recipe, you can replace the fish sauce with a very thin slice or about ½ teaspoon of shrimp paste (it comes in small blocks).

See p. 82 for sources for all these ingredients.

Joyce Jue is the co-author of *The Cooking of Singapore* with Chris Yeo, the chef and owner of *Straits Café* in San Francisco. ♦

BY JENNIFER ARMENTROUT

The building that houses the *Fine Cooking* test kitchen has a rather quirky pedigree—it used to be a duckpin bowling alley, though the only remaining evidence is the parquet wood floor in the hallway. I like the idea that we're in an old bowling alley because in many ways the energy of both places is the same: lots of focused effort, lots of people

Much like the scene in a bowling alley, we have snacks and we're keeping score.

bustling about, and sometimes even cheering when we score with a really successful recipe test.

Also, like the scene in a bowling alley, we have snacks (well, let's just say we're always eating) and we're keeping score—of recipe tests, that is. Sometimes a recipe test is like throwing a strike in your first frame; other times, you have to throw a few gutter balls before you can get a feel for it. But no matter how things go, it's always a fun challenge. Really, the only thing missing from the scene is a pitcher of beer.

Buying fish? Trust your nose

Fish is extremely perishable, so you want to be sure it's fresh when you buy it. One clue to freshness is the overall condition of the fish counter. The air around it shouldn't smell fishy. If it does, shop elsewhere. Fish fillets should be displayed on but not in direct contact with ice. Ask to inspect a fillet close up. It should smell fresh (not fishy), and it should look shiny, moist, and plump. Avoid fish that looks dull or spongy or with flesh that gapes apart.

Once you buy your fish, you want to keep it as cold as possible. Try to make the fish counter the last stop on your list. If it's hot out or if you won't be going straight home, ask the market to pack your fish with some ice. You should eat fish the same day you buy it, but if you don't, put some ice in a colander set over a bowl to catch melted water and put the package of fish on the ice. Store the whole set-up in the back of your refrigerator on the bottom shelf for no more than a day or two.



Sour cherries Get 'em while you can

In my opinion, there's no better treat than a fresh sour cherry pie (like the one on p. 70), brimming with bright-red, plump fruit full of true sweet-tart cherry flavor. Unfortunately, fresh sour cherries are so fragile that most of them end up as canned pie filling rather than appearing in the market. So if you see fresh sour cherries, snap them up. If you buy extra, you can freeze them for another pie or other out-of-season cherry treat.

Plan on using or freezing the cherries within a day or two of bringing them home, and keep them cold until you're ready to pit them. To freeze the cherries, first divide them into batches of the appropriate weight for the recipe you plan on making later. This way, you'll have exactly the right amount of cherries and juice ready to go when you need it. Pit the cherries (see p. 82 for pitting tools) and then freeze them in a single layer on a parchment-lined rimmed baking sheet. Once they're frozen, use the parchment to help you transfer the cherries and the crystals of frozen juice to a zip-top freezer bag.

When ready to use, thaw the cherries overnight in the refrigerator, and include all the cherry juice in the recipe.



Peel peaches and tomatoes easily with boiling water

To peel peaches and tomatoes for pies, canning, or other purposes, have ready a pot of boiling water, a bowl of ice water, a paring knife, and a slotted spoon. Work with one piece of fruit at a time because leaving them in the ice water for too long makes them harder to peel.

1 With the paring knife, lightly score an X into the flower end of the fruit. For tomatoes, remove the core as well.

2 Drop the fruit into the boiling water for 15 to 20 seconds.

3 Use the slotted spoon to briefly dip the fruit in the ice water (shocking them this way stops the cooking).

4 Starting at the X, use the paring knife to help you peel off the skin. It should come off easily; if not, repeat the boiling and shocking steps.



food safety

How long will those leftovers last?

Leftovers—I bet you have some in your refrigerator right now. They're great to have around for a quick meal, but it's also easy to get tired of them and leave them in the fridge for too long. Foods don't necessarily have to look or smell bad in order to be unsafe to eat. The general rule for most leftovers, especially

those that contain meat, fish, poultry, or eggs, is four days, and that's only if you handle them properly.

Most bacteria grow best in a temperature range of 40° to 140°F—the danger zone—so the first thing you should do is make sure your leftovers cool quickly out of the danger zone.

Put them in wide, shallow containers to increase surface area and refrigerate them partially covered until they're chilled, then cover them well. Any perishable food that remains in the danger zone for more than 2 hours (1 hour if the air temperature is above 90°F) should be thrown out. Use a refrigera-

tor thermometer to be sure your refrigerator maintains a temperature below 40°F. And if you don't think you'll eat the leftovers within a few days, wrap them well and freeze them at 0°F or below. Frozen leftovers will remain safe to eat for a long time, but quality will begin to suffer within a few months.

get creative with homemade croutons

Homemade croutons have much better flavor and texture than the dry, rock-hard varieties you buy at the supermarket, and they're so easy to make. You can be creative with the type of bread you use,

the cooking method, and the seasonings. And since homemade croutons freeze well, you can keep a few different varieties on hand for salads, soups, or any other dish that needs a little textural contrast.

Choose your method:

Depending on the texture you like, you can sauté or bake your croutons. Sautéed croutons have a pleasing crisp-chewy texture and will be irregularly browned. Baked croutons are crunchier all the way through and more uniformly golden.

Sautéed Croutons

Yields 2 to 3 cups.

Try this method on irregularly sized pieces from a rustic, airy loaf like ciabatta, or little squares of pita bread.

2 tablespoons unsalted butter
1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
1 large clove garlic, crushed and peeled
4 ounces (2 to 3 cups) bread cubes;
see "Choose your bread" at right
½ teaspoon kosher salt

In a 10-inch or larger skillet, heat the butter and oil over medium-low heat. When the butter is melted, add the garlic clove, mashing it and breaking it up slightly with a wooden spoon, and raise the heat to medium. Cook until the garlic just begins to turn brown, 1 to 2 minutes. Discard the garlic and add the bread cubes and salt. Toss to combine and cook, stirring frequently, until the bread is crisp and well browned on all sides, 4 to 6 minutes. Transfer to a plate lined with paper towels to let cool.

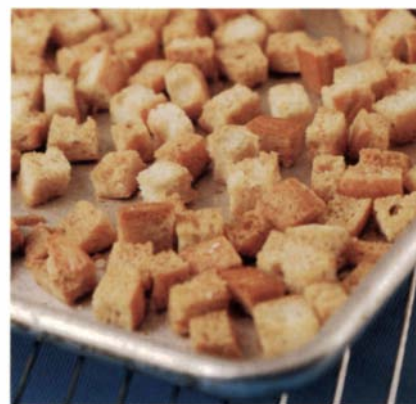
Baked Croutons

Yields 2 to 3 cups.

Baguettes, white sandwich bread, and English muffins make great baked croutons.

3 tablespoons unsalted butter or extra-virgin olive oil
1 large clove garlic, crushed and peeled
4 ounces (2 to 3 cups) bread cubes;
see "Choose your bread" at right
½ teaspoon kosher salt

Heat the oven to 350°F. In a small skillet, melt the butter or heat the oil over medium-low heat. Add the garlic clove, mashing and breaking it up slightly with a wooden spoon, and raise the heat to medium. Cook until the garlic just begins to brown, 1 to 2 minutes. Remove the skillet from the heat and discard the garlic clove. Put the bread cubes in a mixing bowl, drizzle the melted butter or oil all over, sprinkle on the salt, and toss to distribute evenly. Spread the cubes in a single layer on a rimmed baking sheet and bake until golden all the way around, turning once or twice with a spatula, 15 to 20 minutes. Let cool.



From top: Baked sandwich bread with cinnamon sugar; sautéed pita with chipotle chile powder; sautéed ciabatta; baked English muffin with rosemary.

Choose your bread:

The fun thing about making your own croutons is that you can choose what kind of bread to use: day-old baguettes, rustic airy loaves like ciabatta, English muffins, sandwich bread, rosemary bread, even pita all make interesting croutons. There's no need to remove the crust. You also get to choose the size you want the croutons to be; I like to cut sandwich bread and pitas into very small croutons (about ¼-inch dice) and artisan loaves into larger pieces (½-inch dice). For a rustic look, simply rip the bread into pieces. Four ounces of any type of bread will yield between 2 and 3 cups of cubes.

storage tip

Store croutons in zip-top bags or in airtight food-storage containers at room temperature for up to three days or in the freezer for several weeks. They also keep in the fridge for several days with only a small loss of crunchiness.

Customize your croutons

Try one of these additions to give your croutons extra flavor:

- ❖ Fresh herbs, such as thyme leaves or chopped sage or rosemary (stir 1 to 2 sprigs' worth into the butter just before adding the bread).
- ❖ Dried spices, such as pure chile powder, curry powder, crushed fennel, or a spice blend (stir ½ to 1 teaspoon into the butter just before adding the bread).
- ❖ Cinnamon sugar for sweet croutons to use in puddings and custards (omit the garlic and toss the croutons in 1 to 2 tablespoons cinnamon sugar right after cooking).
- ❖ Finely grated hard cheeses, such as Grana Padano or Parmigiano Reggiano (toss the croutons with about 3 tablespoons right after cooking).
- ❖ Basil pesto, tapenade, or puréed sun-dried tomatoes (mix a dollop into the butter before adding the bread).
- ❖ Extra smashed garlic for more garlic flavor (but don't use minced garlic, which tends to burn during sautéing or baking).

—Susie Middleton, editor

at the market

Pluots a colorful cross of plum & apricot

A new kind of fruit has been appearing in markets. The pluot, a cross of plum and apricot, comes in several varieties, like Flavor King, Emerald Beaut, Flavor Rich, and Dapple Dandy (or Dinosaur Egg). They look like large speckled plums with unusual colors. Depending on the variety, the skin can be purplish

black, reddish-pink, or gold, and the flesh can range from red to yellow.

Pluots usually taste more like a plum with a hint of apricot, but each variety exhibits a different combination of these flavors. Pluots are ripe when they're fragrant and yield to gentle pressure. They bruise easily and should be handled with care. Eat them alone or in a fresh fruit salad like the one on p. 55.

gluten (pronounced GLOO-tin)

is a protein that forms when wheat flour mixes with water. Gluten (along with starch granules and, in some cases, egg proteins) is the structural framework of most baked goods, especially breads and many pastries. When wheat flour and water are mixed in doughs or batters, gluten strands form and intertwine, weaving themselves into strong, stretchy sheets. This is what baker Rose Levy Beranbaum means when she talks about gluten development in "Lattice-Top Fruit Pies," on p. 66. Too little gluten makes pie pastry crumble; too much makes it tough.

—Kimberly Y. Masibay, associate editor

at the market

Funny-looking but tasty garlic scapes

If you grow garlic, or you're browsing the farmers' market this June, you might see a curious by-product of garlic.

It's a thick stalk—called a scape—that forms above the leaves. Many growers believe that removing the scape results in bigger heads of garlic. But another reason people remove scapes is that they make good eating.

Garlic scapes are a little fibrous on the outside, but the interior is crunchy-tender, with a delicate garlic flavor. Cut them up (straight across,

not diagonally, to avoid sharp points) and sauté, roast, or stew. Purée cooked scapes and stir into risotto, rice, or beans. Add raw to stir-fries, potato or pasta salads, omelets, or frittatas. Or purée raw scapes in olive oil and use like pesto as a pasta sauce or as a condiment for grilled chicken and meats.

—Ruth Lively, contributor

The verb *dredge* means to coat a food lightly, usually in flour. Certain foods, like boneless chicken, fish fillets, and pork and veal cutlets, benefit from a light coating of flour before they're sautéed. The flour creates a slim barrier between the food and the pan so the surface of the food is less likely to stick, will color more evenly, and will cook up crisp but not tough.

To dredge food in flour, spread some flour in a shallow dish that's wide enough for the item that you want to coat—a cutlet, for example. First pat the cutlet mostly dry with paper towels and then season it with salt and pepper. (It's

best to season the food, rather than the flour, because you'll have better control over the amount of seasoning that actually ends up on the food). Next, dip the cutlet in the flour and turn it over to coat. Take the cutlet out of the flour and shake it lightly over the dish to remove excess flour. The cutlet should be lightly but completely coated.

Remember to dredge foods just before cooking so the coating doesn't get soggy, and discard any leftover flour.

What we mean by: dredge



How to butterfly a chicken breast

When a piece of boneless meat or poultry is of uneven thickness, like a chicken breast or a leg of lamb, it won't cook evenly. Thinner parts get overcooked by the time the thicker parts are done. But you can even things out by butterflying the food. To butterfly something means to cut it horizontally almost but not entirely in half, and then to open it like a book. The benefits of this cut are twofold: the meat or poultry will cook more evenly and more quickly.



step 1
Start on the thicker side of the piece of meat and hold a sharp knife parallel to the cutting surface. Slice the meat almost completely in half, stopping about 1/4 inch from the other side.



step 2
Open the meat like a book and pat the new surface to make the cutlet evenly thick.

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tasting panel

black beans

Simmering a pot of black beans isn't difficult, but it does take a while, so when you're short on time, the canned variety comes in handy. A few turns of the can opener, a good rinse, and you're well on your way to a hearty soup, salad, or salsa. To find out which brands are best to use, we invited eleven *Fine Cooking* staffers to a blind tasting of six widely available brands. We tasted thoroughly rinsed beans, plain, at room temperature. In general, differences among brands were subtle but noteworthy. Read on for a rundown of the results.

—K.Y.M.

Top Pick

BUSH'S BEST

\$0.69 (15 ounces)

These purplish-brown beans are uniform in size, quite firm, and, for the most part, unbroken. Their good flavor—"salt, earthiness, and an almost meaty complexity"—made them our winner. Tasty and good-looking enough to use in any recipe.



Runners-up Listed in order of preference; prices may vary.



2 GOYA

\$0.99 (15 ounces)

With their purplish black color, intact skins, and uniform shape, these beauties are definitely the ones to choose when appearance matters—in whole-bean salads, for example. And their appeal goes beyond looks. Some tasters compared their toothsome texture to home-cooked beans, but a few thought they had a slightly "canned" flavor.



3 LA PREFERIDA

\$0.83 (15 ounces)

More red than purple, these beans had hardly any split skins. But their creamy texture and delicate flavor (salted just enough to coax out the beans' earthiness) failed to impress. As one taster put it: "Not much to like. Not much to dislike either." A good bet for spicy soups or quesadillas where their neutral flavor will be bolstered by other ingredients.



4 KURER'S

\$0.65 (15 ounces)

Their red color makes them look like puny kidney beans, with lots of mealy flesh busting out of the beans' tough skins. Flaws certainly, but not fatal ones when you factor in their "very decent beany flavor." They'd be tasty in a burrito.



5 PROGRESSO

\$0.69 (15 ounces)

Washed out and split open, these beans look like they spent too much time in a pressure cooker. Not surprisingly, their texture is on the mushy side. Although their "neutral flavor doesn't scream black bean," it has an appealing earthiness that would be good in a bean dip.



6 EDEN ORGANIC

\$1.69 (15 ounces)

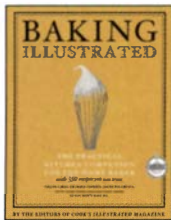
No salt added
They're not kidding when they say these beans have "no salt added." Salt is so conspicuously absent that in the mouth these beans almost create a flavor void. That, and the beans' soft, dry texture made them our least favorite.

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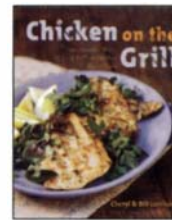
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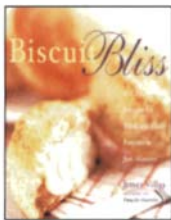
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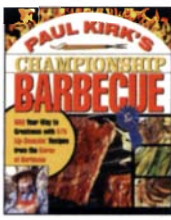
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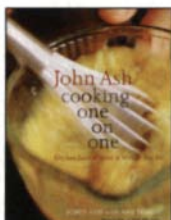
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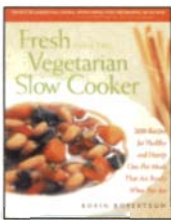
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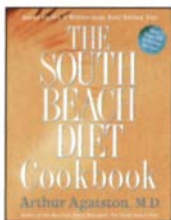
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FROM THE BACK COVER

Weston Farms sells antique cherries and antique apples. For information on Weston Farms, call 262-679-2862, or visit www.applejournal.com/weston

Saucy Shrimp, p. 22

Find Malaysian- and Singaporean-style blachen shrimp paste at Chefshop.com (877-337-2491), which sells 10-ounce blocks for \$2.99. Kalustyans.com (800-352-3451), sells a 4-ounce package of candlenuts for \$4.99. Candlenuts must be eaten cooked, as they are mildly toxic when raw.

For fresh galangal (3.5 ounces for \$3.89) and lemongrass (8 ounces for \$2.99), go to TempleofThai.com.

In Season, p. 52

Good sources for garlic to plant include Filaree Farm (509-422-6940; www.filareefarm.com) Garlicsmiths (509-738-4470; www.garlicsmiths.com) and Irish Eyes—Garden City Seeds (509-964-7000; www.irish-eyes.com). Good varieties sell out fast, so order early.

From Our Test Kitchen, p. 74

For pitting cherries, try the Leifheit cherry stoner, \$39.99, at Chef's Catalog (www.chefscatalog.com; 800-884-2433).

Flank Steak, p. 58

Chipotles canned in adobo for the chipotle-lime butter are available in many grocery stores, but you can also buy them online at Ethnicgrocer.com (from \$1.74). For sources for Aleppo pepper, see the box at right.

Pasta Salad, p. 72

To cool cooked pasta and vegetables quickly, Peter Berley suggests spreading them out on a rimmed baking sheet. If you don't have one, look to The Baker's Catalogue (800-827-6836; www.kingarthurflour.com), where a half sheet pan sells for \$17.95.

Fast, Flavorful Fish, p. 60

For turning and lifting flaky, delicate fish like tilapia, flounder, sole, and red snapper, Rick Rodgers recommends a flexible metal fish spatula with a curved lip. Wüsthof-Trident's slotted turner (\$29.99) is a good one to try. To order, visit Professional Cutlery Direct (www.cutlery.com; 800-859-6994).

Lattice Topped Pies, p. 67

A fluted pastry wheel is a useful tool for giving a pretty zigzag edge to lattice-work dough strips. A Cook's Wares (800-915-9788; www.cookswares.com) carries several brands, starting at \$2.90.

Roul'Pat silicone mats for rolling out dough are \$39.95 at KitchenKrafts.com (800-776-0575). To protect your crust from too much browning, get a pie shield (\$4.99) from KitchenEtc.com (800-232-4070). For turbinado sugar, check out Bulkfoods.com where 5-pound packages are \$7.22.

Aleppo Pepper & Szeged Paprika

Steve Johnson likes Aleppo pepper in his Middle Eastern spice rub (p. 46), and we wholeheartedly agree. This dark red flaky ground pepper from Northern Syria has deep, fruity flavors that aren't overwhelmed by its heat. Aleppo pepper is often sold in specialty stores and in Middle Eastern groceries, but you can also order it by mail. Try Kalustyans.com (800-352-3451) and Ethnicgrocer.com. Or use a Hungarian hot paprika like Szeged brand, which is sold in most supermarkets. Note that paprika is more finely ground than Aleppo, so you'll need less.

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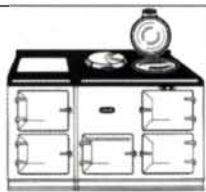
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nutritioninformation

Recipe	Page	Calories		Protein	Carb	Fats (g)				Chol	Sodium	Fiber	Notes
(analysis per serving)		total	from fat	(g)	(g)	total	sat	mono	poly	(mg)	(mg)	(g)	
Flank Steak	42												
Mediterranean-Style Flank Steak		240	140	23	1	15	5	8	1	55	1230	0	based on 6 servings
Chunky Tomato-Basil Vinaigrette		100	100	0	2	11	1	8	1	0	110	0	per 2 tablespoons
Latin-Style Flank Steak		220	110	23	3	12	5	5	1	55	470	2	based on 6 servings
Chipotle Butter		110	100	0	1	12	7	4	1	30	150	0	per tablespoon
Middle Eastern-Style Flank Steak		210	110	23	2	12	5	5	1	55	460	2	based on 6 servings
Eggplant Compote		160	130	1	7	14	2	11	1	0	150	3	per ½ cup
Zucchini	48												
Sautéed Zucchini with Basil & Sun-Dried Tomatoes		120	100	1	4	11	2	8	1	0	590	1	based on 4 servings
Grilled Zucchini with Lemon-Balsamic Vinaigrette		110	90	4	4	10	2	6	1	5	530	1	based on 4 servings
Spiced Couscous with Grilled Zucchini		380	130	9	52	15	2	11	2	0	740	5	based on 4 servings
Spicy Hoisin-Glazed Zucchini		90	70	2	5	8	1	3	3	0	670	1	based on 4 servings
Tex-Mex Sautéed Zucchini & Potatoes		220	130	3	20	14	2	11	1	0	740	3	based on 4 servings
Fruit Salads	52												
Mixed Berries with Vanilla Bean Syrup		110	5	1	28	0.5	0	0	0	0	0	7	based on 6 servings
Peaches & Nectarines with Rosemary & Honey Sauce		150	5	1	38	0.5	0	0	0	0	0	3	based on 6 servings
Apricots with Moscato & Thyme Syrup		290	5	3	50	0.5	0	0	0	0	10	5	based on 6 servings
Melons with Ginger Syrup		110	5	2	27	0.5	0	0	0	0	20	2	based on 6 servings
Pasta Salads	56												
Pasta Salad with Arugula & Corn		270	120	9	28	14	5	7	2	20	460	2	based on 10 servings
Sun-Dried Tomato Vinaigrette		80	70	0	2	8	1	6	1	0	240	0	based on 10 servings
Pasta Salad with Tomatoes, Beans & Asparagus		230	120	7	22	13	3	9	1	5	280	2	based on 10 servings
Pesto Vinaigrette		130	120	3	1	13	2	9	1	5	270	0	based on 10 servings
Pasta Salad with Snowpeas, Carrots, Beans & Goat Cheese		250	130	7	25	14	3	9	1	5	240	3	based on 10 servings
Lemon-Herb Vinaigrette		110	100	0	3	11	2	9	1	0	190	0	based on 10 servings
Fast, Flavorful Fish	62												
Sautéed Snapper with Broken Black-Olive Vinaigrette		450	260	35	10	29	4	21	3	60	760	1	based on 4 servings
Baked Tilapia with Tarragon-Scallion Stuffing		360	180	30	9	20	11	6	2	165	360	0	based on 4 servings
Broiled Flounder with Parmesan Caesar Glaze		260	130	29	1	15	7	5	3	85	930	0	based on 6 servings
Lattice-Top Pies	66												
Cherry Lattice Pie		490	230	5	62	26	16	8	1	70	180	2	based on 8 servings
Rhubarb Lattice Pie		450	230	5	52	26	16	8	1	70	180	3	based on 8 servings
Blueberry Lattice Pie		460	230	5	56	26	16	8	1	70	180	3	based on 8 servings
Peach Lattice Pie		480	230	6	60	26	16	8	1	70	180	4	based on 8 servings
Saucy Shrimp	72												
Shrimp with Chile-Lemongrass Sauce		340	180	20	22	21	2	9	9	170	900	2	based on 4 servings
From Our Test Kitchen	74												
Sautéed Croutons		80	45	1	7	5	2	2	1	10	220	0	per ¼ cup
Baked Croutons		80	45	1	7	5	3	1	1	10	220	0	per ¼ cup
Quick & Delicious	86c												
Grilled Chicken & Arugula Caesar Salad with Croutons		610	350	47	17	38	7	25	5	120	1400	1	with 1 oz. baguette
Grilled Butterflied Chicken with Cilantro-Lime Butter		290	190	23	1	21	9	10	2	95	1220	0	based on 2 servings
Grilled Hoisin Chicken in Lettuce Cups		590	290	50	21	33	9	15	7	150	1980	4	based on 3 servings
Fastest Barbecued Chicken		370	110	29	36	12	4	5	3	100	2980	1	based on 4 servings
Quickest Slaw		35	0	1	8	0	0	0	0	0	460	3	based on 4 servings
Moist Mustard-Rosemary Chicken for a Crowd		280	110	40	0	12	2	4	5	115	710	0	based on 8 servings
Seven-Layer Grilled Southwestern Chicken Salad		420	260	31	11	29	6	16	5	70	1070	5	based on 4 servings
Grilled Chicken with Sun-Dried & Fresh Tomato Salsa		460	280	36	8	31	5	22	3	95	1650	2	based on 2 servings

The nutritional analyses have been calculated by a registered dietitian at The Food Consulting Company of Del Mar, California. When a recipe gives a choice of ingredients, the first choice is the one used in the

calculations. Optional ingredients and those listed without a specific quantity are not included. When a range of ingredient amounts or servings is given, the smaller amount or portion is used. When the

quantity of salt and pepper aren't specified, the analysis is based on ¼ teaspoon salt and ⅛ teaspoon pepper per serving for entrées, and ⅛ teaspoon salt and ⅛ teaspoon pepper per serving for side dishes.

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Rainbow

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While most cherry growing in the United States is on a large, commercial scale, Ken Weston has established a niche for himself, farming both sweet and sour cherries by hand for over sixty years, and selling them at farmers' markets and the family farmstand. Montmorency, shiny as nail polish and fire-engine red, is the standard variety for pies and tarts, while Starkrimson and Stark Gold are old-time sweet varieties delicious for eating out of hand.

What Ken calls Rainbow is the most striking sweet cherry of all, as well as a novelty and a puzzle. The stripe down its middle can occur as a mutation on the odd branch of the occasional tree, but a whole treeful is a rarity. Tasting to check for ripeness, Ken says, "This may be one of the only Rainbow Cherry trees in Wisconsin." Sounds like a stretch, but the botanists I've consulted say he's probably right.

—Amy Albert, senior editor ♦



Ken Weston picks cherries by hand, rather than with a mechanical tree-shaker. This lessens the chances of damaging the trees and the fruit. The lift, which Ken designed himself, is safer and more comfortable than a ladder.

BY SUSIE MIDDLETON

Grilled chicken

in the summer can't be beat, and when you use a gas grill and boneless breasts or thighs, it's speedy as well as delicious. The directions in these recipes are for gas grilling, but you can certainly cook these dishes over charcoal, too. Simply build a medium-hot fire and follow our guidelines for doneness. A gas grill convects heat most efficiently with the lid down, but a charcoal grill doesn't need to be covered when cooking thin cuts directly over the coals. Either way you grill, here are some pointers to guarantee the tastiest chicken:

Keep the grill hot. The best way to keep boneless chicken moist is to cook it over medium-high heat, so that it sears rather than bakes.

Keep the grill grates clean and oiled. Before grilling, use a wire-bristled brush to scrape the grates well, and rub them with a clean rag dipped in a bit of vegetable oil.

Keep the fat on the chicken. For truly flavorful grilled chicken, choose boneless thighs over breasts (if your family will let you) and don't trim off most of the fat; it lends a truly "chickeny" grilled flavor.



Grilled Chicken Breasts with Sun-Dried & Fresh Tomato Salsa

Serves two.

- 8 oz. small red and yellow cherry tomatoes, halved or quartered, depending on size**
- 2 Tbs. chopped drained oil-packed sun-dried tomatoes**
- 2 tsp. drained capers (roughly chopped if large)**
- ½ tsp. minced garlic**
- 1 Tbs. sherry vinegar**
- 2 tsp. lightly chopped fresh thyme leaves; plus sprigs for garnish, if you like**
- 3 Tbs. plus 2 tsp. extra-virgin olive oil**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**
- 2 large (6 to 8 oz.) skinless, boneless chicken breast halves, rinsed and patted dry, tenderloins removed, butterflied (see From Our Test Kitchen, p. 78)**

In a small bowl, combine the cherry tomatoes, sun-dried tomatoes, capers, garlic, sherry vinegar, 1 tsp. of the thyme, 3 Tbs. of the olive oil, ¼ tsp. salt and a few grinds of pepper. Set aside, stirring occasionally to let the flavors combine.

Heat a gas grill to high. Put the chicken in a shallow nonreactive pan or plate. Rub the chicken all over with salt (about ½ tsp. for each piece of chicken), a few grinds of pepper, and the remaining 1 tsp. thyme. Drizzle ½ tsp. olive oil over each side of each piece of chicken and rub all over.

Lay the butterflied breasts on the hot grill grates and cook, covered, until the chicken has grill marks, 1½ minutes. With tongs, rotate the breasts 90 degrees (to get a crosshatch of grill marks) and continue grilling until grill marks form, another 1½ minutes. Flip the breasts and cook the second side in the same way but for a little less time, grilling for 1 minute in one direction and 1 minute in another, until cooked through.

Transfer the breasts immediately to two warm serving plates, stir the tomato mixture and spoon equal amounts (it will be a generous portion) over each piece of chicken. Garnish with a sprig of thyme, if you like.



Grilled Butterflied Chicken Breasts with Cilantro-Lime Butter

Serves two.

- 2 Tbs. unsalted butter, softened**
- 1½ tsp. finely chopped fresh cilantro; plus 2 large sprigs for garnish**
- ½ tsp. finely grated lime zest**
- ¼ tsp. Green Tabasco or other jalapeño hot sauce**
- Kosher salt**
- 2 large (8 oz.) skinless, boneless chicken breast halves, rinsed and patted dry, tenderloins removed, butterflied (see From Our Test Kitchen, p. 78)**
- 2 Tbs. fresh lime juice**
- 1 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil**

In a small bowl, mash the butter, chopped cilantro, lime zest, Tabasco, and ¼ tsp. kosher salt with a wooden spoon or rubber spatula to form a smooth butter. Scrape onto a piece of plastic and roll and twist the plastic to shape the butter into a short log. Refrigerate until firm enough to slice, 20 to 25 minutes.

Meanwhile, put the butterflied chicken in a shallow non-reactive pan or on a plate.

Season with ¾ tsp. salt and drizzle with the lime juice and olive oil. Let the chicken sit for 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, heat a gas grill to high. Lay the chicken breasts on the hot grill and cook, covered, until they have grill marks, 1½ minutes. With tongs, rotate the chicken 90 degrees (to get a cross-hatch of grill marks), and continue grilling until grill marks form, 1½ more minutes. Flip the breasts and cook the second side in the same way but for a little less time, grilling for 1 minute in one direction and 1 minute in another, until cooked through. Immediately transfer the chicken to two warm serving plates, thinly slice the chilled butter, and arrange the butter slices all over the top of the chicken. Garnish with the cilantro sprigs and serve immediately.



Grilled Hoisin Chicken in Lettuce Cups

Serves three as a main course; six to eight as a starter.

- ½ cup hoisin sauce**
- 4 tsp. rice vinegar**
- 1 Tbs. soy sauce**
- 4 skinless, boneless chicken thighs (about 1½ lb.), untrimmed; rinsed and patted dry**
- Kosher salt**
- 1 large head Boston lettuce, leaves separated, washed and dried**
- 1 cup loosely packed torn fresh basil (about 20 large leaves)**
- 1 cup loosely packed torn fresh mint (about 1¾ oz. bunch)**
- 1 bunch scallions (whites and most of the greens), thinly sliced (about ½ cup)**
- ½ cup coarsely chopped salted peanuts**
- 1 fresh jalapeño or other small hot chile, very thinly sliced crosswise (optional)**

Heat a gas grill to medium high. In a small bowl, whisk the hoisin sauce, rice vinegar, and soy sauce. In a larger bowl, season the chicken with 1 tsp. salt and 2 Tbs. of the hoisin mixture. Arrange the lettuce leaves, basil, and mint separately on a platter and put the scallions, peanuts, and jalapeño slices (if using) in small serving bowls.

Grill the chicken thighs, covered, until well browned and beginning to blacken around the edges, about 5 minutes (rotate the chicken 90 degrees halfway through cooking each side for the most even cooking). Flip and continue to grill until cooked through, about 5 minutes more per side. Let the chicken rest for 8 to 10 minutes and then chop into ¼- to ½-inch dice. Transfer the chopped chicken to a serving bowl, add the remaining hoisin mixture, and toss to coat thoroughly. Put the bowl on the table with a serving spoon, along with the platter of lettuce and herbs and the condiments. To eat, spoon the chicken onto the middle of a lettuce leaf, top with basil, mint, scallions, peanuts, and jalapeño (if using), and roll the edges of the lettuce leaves up and around the filling and garnishes.

Serving suggestion:

For an interesting hors d'oeuvre, spoon the chicken into very small lettuce leaves, garnish, and set on a platter.



Fastest Barbecued Chicken

Serves four.

6 Tbs. dark brown sugar
1 Tbs. chile powder
2 tsp. dry mustard
Kosher salt
8 skinless, boneless chicken thighs, rinsed and patted dry
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup tomato ketchup
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup low-salt soy sauce
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup cider vinegar
1 Tbs. Dijon mustard
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. Chipotle Tabasco or other chipotle hot sauce; more to taste
Quickest Slaw (optional; see below right)

Heat a gas grill to between medium and medium high. In a small bowl, combine 2 Tbs. of the brown sugar with the chile powder, dry mustard, and 1 Tbs. salt. Spread the chicken thighs on a large baking sheet and rub the spice mix all over them.

In a small saucepan, whisk the remaining 4 Tbs. brown sugar with the ketchup, soy sauce, cider vinegar, and Dijon mustard; bring to a boil. Lower the heat to a simmer and cook, stirring frequently, for 2 minutes to dissolve the sugar and blend the flavors. Remove from the heat and let cool slightly. Taste and add a pinch of salt, if needed. Stir in the Chipotle Tabasco, adding more to taste.

Spread the chicken thighs out on the grill, cover, and cook on the first side until they turn a deep reddish brown and begin to blacken in places (they'll also shrink and plump up), 4 to 5 minutes (rotate the thighs once 90 degrees on each side for the most even cooking). Flip the thighs and continue to cook on the second side until they're firm, deeply colored, and slightly blackened in places, 3 to 4 minutes. Using a brush, dab a generous amount of sauce over the top of the chicken, cook for 1 minute, flip, slather the other side with sauce, cook for 1 minute, and remove from the heat. Arrange on a platter and serve with any remaining sauce and the slaw if you like.

Quickest Slaw

Toss $\frac{1}{2}$ head green cabbage, cored and very thinly sliced (about 4 cups), with 3 Tbs. fresh lime juice, 1 tsp. granulated sugar, and $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp. kosher salt. Let it sit for 20 to 30 minutes, tossing occasionally.

Note: This is easy fare for informal outdoor gatherings. You can make the rub and the sauce up to a day in advance.



Moist Mustard-Rosemary Chicken for a Crowd

Serves eight.

$3\frac{1}{2}$ to 4 lb. skinless, boneless chicken breasts or thighs (or a mix), rinsed and patted dry
Kosher salt and fresh coarsely ground black pepper
 $\frac{1}{3}$ cup Dijon mustard
 $\frac{1}{3}$ cup mayonnaise (preferably Hellman's or Best Foods brand)
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon chopped fresh rosemary

Heat a gas grill to medium high. Remove the tenderloins from the chicken breasts for more even cooking; reserve for another use. Put the chicken in a large bowl and season with $1\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. salt and lots of fresh coarsely ground pepper. Add the mustard, mayonnaise, and rosemary and mix thoroughly to combine and to coat the chicken well. Spread the chicken out on the grill, watching the heat carefully; there may be a few flare-ups. Cover the grill. Grill the chicken on one side until golden-brown grill marks form, 2 to 3 minutes. Rotate

the chicken 90 degrees and grill for another 2 to 3 minutes (to get a crosshatch of golden grill marks); flip and repeat on the other side, grilling for another 4 to 5 minutes (for a total cooking time of 8 to 10 minutes) until cooked through. The chicken should be firm and golden brown all over. Arrange on a platter to serve family style.

VARIATIONS: You can add other chopped fresh herbs or spices or a little pesto or hot sauce to the mustard-mayonnaise mixture.

Serving suggestion:

This chicken is a great ingredient base for salads (scale the recipe up or down as needed) and is delicious cold.



Grilled Chicken & Arugula Caesar Salad with Grilled Croutons

Serves four.

- 4 oz. baby arugula (about 5 cups loosely packed), washed and dried**
- 2 Tbs. plus 2 tsp. fresh lemon juice (from 1 large lemon)**
- 2 tsp. finely grated lemon zest**
- 4 oil-packed anchovy fillets**
- 2 large cloves garlic, crushed and peeled**
- ¼ tsp. black peppercorns**
- ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil**
- 2 Tbs. Dijon mustard**
- Kosher salt**
- ½ cup fresh, finely grated Parmigiano Reggiano**
- 1 ½ lb. skinless, boneless chicken breast halves (about 3 large), rinsed and patted dry**
- 4 slices French baguette, cut 1 inch thick on an extreme diagonal (6 to 8 inches long)**
- Cherry tomatoes, halved or quartered (optional)**

Heat a gas grill to medium high. Put the arugula in a large bowl, cover with a damp paper towel, and refrigerate. In a blender, combine the lemon juice and zest, anchovies, garlic, and peppercorns with 6 Tbs. of the oil, 1 Tbs. of the mustard, and ½ tsp. salt. Blend thoroughly until most of the peppercorns are well broken up and the dressing is emulsified. Add 2 Tbs. of the

grated Parmigiano and blend to incorporate. Leave the dressing in the blender.

In a medium bowl, toss the chicken with the remaining 1 Tbs. mustard and ¾ tsp. salt. Brush the bread with the remaining 2 Tbs. oil and season with salt. Grill the chicken, covered, until golden grill marks form, 5 to 6 minutes (for even cooking, rotate the chicken 90 degrees halfway through cooking each side). Flip the breasts and continue to cook, covered, until golden grill marks form and the chicken is cooked through, 5 to 6 minutes. Let rest on a cutting board for 5 minutes. Grill the bread until dark around the edges and golden brown in the center, 1 to 2 minutes per side. Slice the chicken thinly on an angle. Cut each bread slice into 10 cubes. Pulse the dressing in the blender; add a little of it to the arugula, just to coat.

Divide the arugula among four plates and sprinkle with a little Parmigiano. Toss the chicken with the remaining dressing and arrange over the arugula. Sprinkle with the remaining Parmigiano and arrange the croutons and tomatoes (if using) around the salad.



Seven-Layer Grilled Southwestern Chicken Salad

Serves four.

- 1 lb. chicken breast tenderloins, rinsed and patted dry**
- 1 ½ tsp. plus a pinch of hot chile powder**
- Kosher salt**
- 1 tsp. plus 2 ½ tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil**
- 3 cups (6 to 7 oz.) coarsely chopped crisp lettuce (like iceberg or romaine)**
- ½ cup loosely packed fresh cilantro leaves**
- 1 ripe, medium avocado, pitted, peeled, and cut into ½-inch dice**
- 1 generous cup (6 to 7 oz.) grape tomatoes, quartered, or 1 small ripe tomato, cut into ½-inch dice**
- 4 scallions (white and light green parts), thinly sliced**
- 2 oz. (about ½ cup) crumbled fresh goat cheese, chilled**
- ½ cup toasted pine nuts or pepitas**
- 2 Tbs. fresh lime juice**

Heat a gas grill to medium high. Toss the tenderloins with 1 ½ tsp. chile powder, 1 tsp. salt, and 1 tsp. olive oil to coat thoroughly. Put the tenderloins on the grill and cook, covered, until lightly browned, 2 to 3 minutes. Flip and continue to cook until

firm and cooked through (they should still be a bit flexible), another 2 to 3 minutes. Transfer to a cutting board and let rest for a few minutes. When cool enough to handle, chop into ½-inch pieces.

Arrange the lettuce over the bottom of a wide (preferably glass) salad bowl. Sprinkle the cilantro leaves over the lettuce. Add the diced avocado and sprinkle ½ tsp. salt over it. In successive layers, add the chopped chicken, diced tomato, scallions, goat cheese, and nuts.

In a small bowl, whisk the lime juice with the remaining 2 ½ Tbs. olive oil with a large pinch of salt and a large pinch of chile powder. Drizzle the mixture over the whole salad. At the table, gently toss all the layers together and serve.

VARIATIONS: You can also add a layer of cooked fresh corn kernels or a layer of chopped black olives.

Tip: If you like, cook the chicken tenderloins under the broiler instead.